INTRODUCTION

In 1970 I made a study trip throughout Africa, visiting our missionaries in a number of countries. While in Livingstone, Zambia, sister Elaine Brittell took me out to the Namwianga School which was in that area of the country. I well remember meeting a couple by the name of Alvin and Georgia Hobby. We found them working at the clinic that they operated to provide for the minor needs of the students and those who lived nearby. Brother Hobby was kind enough to show me around and to explain the work they were doing, both at the clinic and with the school.

Years before that, I remember hearing brother George Benson in his mission classes speak highly of the Hobbys and their work in Zambia. Because of such an introduction, I was very glad to meet them.

After giving many years of service to the cause of Christ in Zambia, where they taught, operated a clinic, assisted with a local translation of the scripture, and engaged in many other activities, they retired and returned to the States. They presently make their home in Grove, Oklahoma where sister Hobby has been busy writing this book.

When sister Hobby contacted me about the possibility of publishing her book, I was thrilled with the opportunity. I am anxious to get their story out, so that others can be inspired by it. I believe that missionaries need to write about their work. Unless they do, their experiences, wisdom gained, and lessons that might be learned, will be forever lost. I further believe that these books, once printed, should be read by members of the church everywhere. They should be used as textbooks and should be required reading in our Christian colleges and schools. They should also be kept in every church library across the country. How in the world are we going to learn of the needs and opportunities in these different places, thrill to the work that has been done, and to be encouraged to want to help with it, unless we read and profit from such materials?

"GIVE US THIS BREAD" gives us a glimpse of the heart and soul of Zambia, the people, the missionaries, and the influence Christianity is having on them. The pictures and illustrations will help to heighten your interest in the story. Read it for your own information and enjoyment and then share it with your family, the local congregation, and your friends. I pray that you will, for your sake and for the blessings it will bring to those with whom you share it.

J. C. Choate
Winona, MS 38967
February 2, 1988

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To a few of the many, without whose help and encouragement we could not have continued sharing the BREAD OF LIFE.

Chesley Roberson, Alvin's uncle, and our first Treasurer, who collected small sums from churches in Marshall County, Tennessee, and made monthly reports.

George S. Benson, who sent funds to help us operate the schools, and who encouraged our support.

Jack and Kay Pruett, Georgia's brother and his wife who sent funds for emergencies, or to help with the children's education.

Eugene Hayes, brother-in-law of G. S. Benson, who collected and forwarded support funds to us for about fifteen years.

South Highland Church of Christ, Little Rock, Arkansas, who sponsored and supported us from 1968 until they merged with Geyer Springs Church.

Geyer Springs Church of Christ, who continued our sponsorship and support until we retired in 1982, and who continue their help to us with health insurance.

Joe and Leta Martin and Dahlia Street Church at Denver, who supplied an additional work fund which, while

Acknowledgements

we lived at Namwianga Christian Secondary School, supplied medicines for the clinic.

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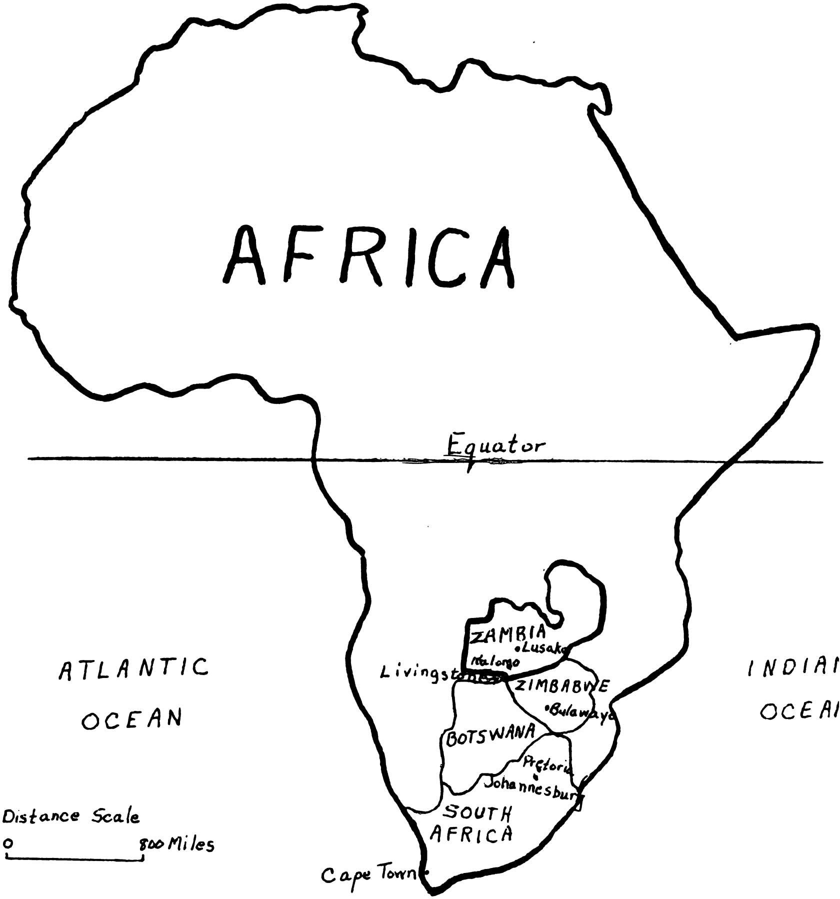
Claudia and Bill Petty, Georgia's sister and her husband, who were a constant source of help and encouragement in many ways.

The W. N. Shorts, George M. Scotts, Dow Merritts, A. B. Reeses, J. C. Shewmakers, and Leonard Baileys, who were our co-workers and teachers.


AFRICA
Equator
ATLANTIC
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INDIA
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ZAMBIA
Lusaka
Nalongo
Livingstone
ZIMBABWE
Bulawayo
BOTSWANA
Pretoria
Johannesburg
SOUTH
AFRICA
Cape Town
Distance Scale
0
800 Miles

CONTENTS

Chapter One
We View the Southern Cross 1
Chapter Two
So This Is Africa! 14
Chapter Three
Our First Home 39
Chapter Four
Vleis, Velds, and a New Hobby 54
Chapter Five
Into the Villages 61
Chapter Six
The Sunlight Projector 69
Chapter Seven
African Students and African Languages 79
Chapter Eight
Snakes and Witchcraft 92
Chapter Nine
Roughing It In The Zambezi Valley 101
Chapter Ten
The Marine Tiger 114
Chapter Eleven
Growing Up In Africa 117
Chapter Twelve
The Winds of Change 136
Chapter Thirteen
African Ways and Wisdom 152
Chapter Fourteen
Smoke That Thunders 169
Chapter Fifteen
The Tide . . . . . . Turns Again Home 199
Chapter Sixteen
A Backward Look – Zambia Today 203

CHAPTER 1

WE VIEW THE SOUTHERN CROSS

It was Christmas, 1936. My parents and I learned that a few students who were unable to travel from the college campus to their homes because of distance and finances were remaining on the campus throughout the holiday. We lived in Searcy, Arkansas, home of Harding College, and so we invited all of the students to our home for Christmas. Alvin was among them, and to my surprise, brought me a comb, brush and mirror set as a Christmas gift!

I had met Alvin more than a year earlier. In fact, during the summer before he enrolled as a student, I had worked as a secretary in the Dean's office and had typed the Dean's letters to Alvin. His letters to the Dean seemed to be better than average and I mentioned him to one of my girl friends, thinking that when he arrived on campus, she might be interested in him. But when he arrived, he was more than two inches shorter than she, and on that trivial detail, she rejected him.

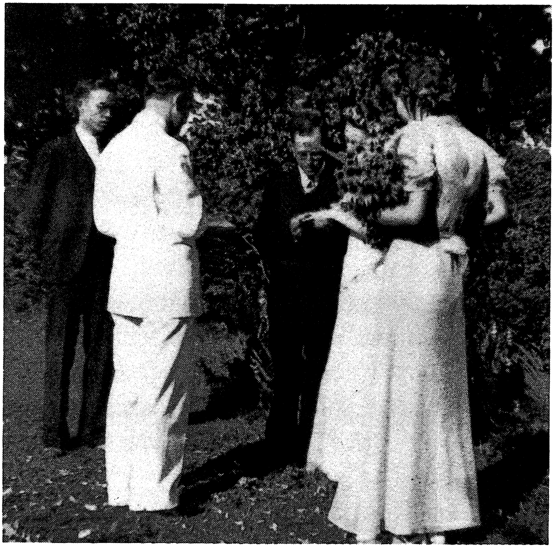
Dow Merritt, who had been a missionary in Northern Rhodesia, returned to the States on furlough and during the family's stay at Harding College, Mr. Merritt was recruiting workers for a missionary effort in that African country which was a colony of Great Britain. He planned to establish there a Christian elementary school for boys, to which would be added as soon as possible a separate elementary school for girls, and also teacher training. Alvin had become an elementary school teacher at age 16 and had taught for several years, so he knew that this was work that he could do, and he volunteered to help with this effort. He was quiet and unobtrusive, and, as it turned out, the perfect personality to be influential with those people who have disdain for those who are easily angered, or for those whom they feel are proud, selfish or arrogant.

After Alvin graduated from Harding College in the spring of 1937, he wrote letters to me, and in one of them there was a statement that impressed me considerably – he was planning to raise enough travel funds for **two** people!

I believe that the Lord looked at Alvin and saw in him a good man with potential for His work, but one who would need a wife who was suited for the task ahead in order for him to realize his full potential. And in retrospect, I believe He chose me to do the job. Alvin and I agree that neither of us, fifty years ago, had the wisdom to make such important decisions on our own -- if, indeed, we would have such wisdom even today. But we are sure that it was the correct one, and that the Lord Himself had a hand in it.

We became engaged in late summer, 1937, and Alvin took a teaching job at Strawberry, Arkansas, to wait for me to complete my senior year in college. We were married the next day after graduation, June 3, 1938. It was a sunrise wedding in the garden of the Dean's home with Dean Sears officiating -- a simple affair.

June 3, 1938



To the strains of "To a Wild Rose," rendered by my friend, Constance Ford, I walked with my father along paths strewn with field daisies which Alvin and my bride's maid, Zelma Bell, and I had picked in the pastures the day before. My bouquet and head garland were fashioned from these daisies, too, and everyone was invited. Because of our plans, everyone was interested, and had given us a generous shower of household goods, luggage and, from the faculty, a beautiful set of sterling table silverware.

We went to live in the beautiful, rolling hill country of Tennessee, Alvin's home, until the sailing date, about mid-July, only six weeks from our wedding date.

Mr. Merritt had now been in Northern Rhodesia about a year, molding bricks and constructing buildings for the new school. Not only classrooms had to be built, but dormitories for the students and houses for the teachers, because this would be a boarding school.

Mrs. Myrtle Rowe, a teacher in the elementary school at Harding, also agreed to go teach in the new school. Mrs. Rowe, Alvin and I, together with the W. L. Brown family, sailed from New York on the Queen Mary, July 20, 1938.

Although the Queen Mary is considered a luxury liner, for us it was not so. Our tiny room, six by eight feet, was five decks below the main deck, and was reached by a combination of elevator and stairs. It was well lighted and ventilated. My diary states: "The Queen Mary is the highest, longest, heaviest and fastest passenger ship in the world." In all, she carried 3,000 passengers, but only 640 of them were "tourist," or third-class, which explains why our deck space was so small.

The ocean was more beautiful than I had anticipated, a deep, dark blue, continually surging and boiling, forming little sprays of white on the edge of the waves -- "white caps." We had brought with us a folding deck chair with a shade over it, but the wind was so strong that Alvin was obliged to tie it down. Salt water continually sprayed into our faces and etched into our memories the characteristic smell of the ocean that one never forgets.

On the second day out, an iceberg was sighted and the weather became too cold and windy for us to be comfortable on deck, so we spent more time in the garden lounge. Mrs. Rowe and I played "store," using English money, thus preparing ourselves for our visit to England in a few days time.

On the evening of July 24th, Alvin and I had "the surprise of our lives," as my diary says. When we went to dinner, there was a big platter of pastries in the center of the table, and to the left of the platter was a little black chest tied with a wide red ribbon, bearing the words in gold: "Bon Voyage." On the card was written: "To Mr. and Mrs. Hobby 'Lest Auld acquaintance be forgot! Table 43 'Queen Mary' wishes you great success and happiness in your noble work. July 20-25, 1938." Inside the chest, fitted on black velvet, was a heavy silver condiment set. The table steward whispered to me that it was like the sets used on the tables in first-class. The ones who had prepared this surprise were the eight others at our table, all considerably older than ourselves, and only one an American. The others were from England, Scotland, and Canada.

We sailed along the shores of France on the morning of July 25th, and from a porthole I watched the passing panorama – green fields, well laid-out, cities and church steeples, small boats of all kinds near the shore, little sail boats that looked like toys with red and orange sails. The Queen Mary did not dock at France, but two smaller boats came out to meet her. These took the mail, passengers and baggage ashore.

Later in the morning, Alvin came to tell me that we were passing the Isle of Wight and that it was very interesting. I dressed in all the clothing that I could find and went out on deck. Sure enough, the Isle was beautiful. We passed two or three cities on the coast and a beautiful castle, Norris Castle, on a hill with well-kept lawns and trees.

As we sailed into the docks of Southampton, we passed near the Balmoral Castle, the boat on which we were to sail for Africa on the following Friday. My diary says: "Our two trunks were lost and we had to find them, but we managed to get our baggage taken care of and through customs just in time to catch the train for London. This was 3:30." Continuing the diary:

"The trains in England seem strange to us. The engines are very small and old fashioned looking -- not at all streamlined. The box cars are very small, too. The train is made up of little rooms with seats in both ends and on one side is a window, and on the other, a door that opens out into an aisle that has glass on the side. There is room in one of the little compartments to seat six or eight.

"I think our trip from Southampton to and through

London is by far the most interesting part of my trip so far. I have never thought that a country could be so quaint as England. Almost all of the houses have either red tile or thatched roofs. They are built very much alike -- none of them over two stories high and built of brick or rock with pretty roofs and beautifully kept gardens and yards. Although we saw the backs of the houses most of the time and the back yards, the yards were filled with bright, beautiful flowers. The fields, too, were full of ferns and wild flowers -- red, yellow, and purple. Bright wild flowers were all along the roadside. The wheat fields are still green and the sheep and cattle were grazing there.

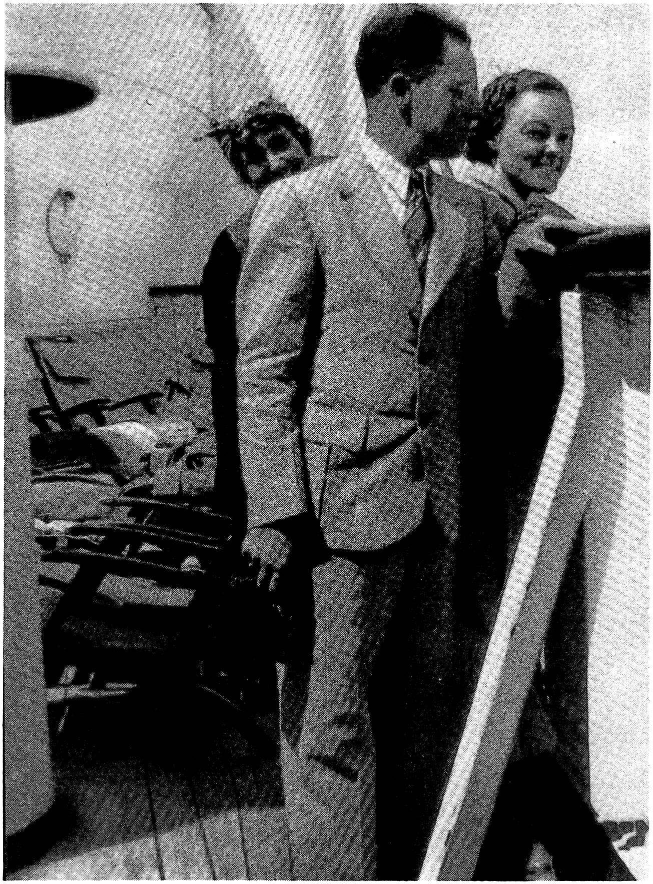
"The trip from the railway station to the missionary home where we were to stay was five miles. We passed by the parliament buildings and they were beautiful with their ornamental spires, both tall and short. Apartment houses would have been rather dull and ugly, but in each window was a small green window-box with red geraniums in bloom. This is certainly a country of flowers and red geraniums seem to be a favorite.

"We next saw Buckingham Palace, and soldiers wearing uniforms which consisted of dark pants with a red stripe along the leg, red coats and high "busbies," tall, furry, rounded caps. Outside the Palace gate, soldiers pranced back and forth. Across from the Palace was large and well-kept Hyde Park.

"We found the mission home to be a rather pretty three-storied building, with tall ceilings, winding stairways, carved woodwork around the fireplaces, large pictures and mirrors, Bible quotations and antique furniture, as if we had stepped into it from a Dickens story book. The occupants were story-book characters, too, wearing frills and old-fashioned dresses. They were quiet and dignified, a sharp contrast to most of the women we had seen on the Queen Mary. Our table was served by maids, together with a hostess at each end -- meat, gravy, potatoes, cabbage and apple pudding with sauce. After the meal was finished, a little bell was rung, everyone rose and thanks was offered. After this, we went to the parlor and hymn books were passed out. Everyone, including the maids, participated in the fifteen-minute devotional.

"Our room on the third-floor was freshly painted and comfortable with its antique furnishings, including a pitcher of water and a basin. All of this for five to eight shillings or $1.25 to $2.00 per day."

The next pages of my diary describe in detail our visits to the museum, cathedrals and other famous places, but on July 29th, we boarded the "Balmoral Castle," a Union-Castle Line boat, bound for Cape Town, and my diary says, "The boat was so crowded that they had to give us a first-class room, and we didn't mind at all." We found the Bay of Biscay to be quite rough and so seasickness plagued us until after a day or two we reached smooth, oily, glassy waters where there were no white caps – only slight swells in the dark, bluish water, covered with thousands of small ripples or waves, two or three inches apart. People all around us were sitting in the sunshine sewing, writing, talking, playing games, walking or swimming. There were about 240 tourist-class passengers on board, and about 175 first-class. Most of the first-class passengers were bound for the island of Madeira.



On the deck of the Queen Mary, en route to London.
Mrs. Brown in background – July, 1938

In London, near gates to Buckingham Palace – July, 1938

On August 1, I wrote: "The water was a little rougher this morning and I was not feeling so well. I have been wishing for some cornbread and good vegetables. They serve potatoes almost every meal and fresh lettuce and tomatoes or beets for lunch, but for dinner it is usually peas or cabbage or something worse. I would like a good meal of green beans, cornbread, stewed tomatoes and corn-on-the-cob. I haven't seen any cornbread since I left Tennessee. After thinking of their cabbage and potatoes, I wasn't hungry at breakfast and didn't eat much. We walked around on deck awhile and I went down to wash my hair. I had only a small amount of hot water that was left from Alvin's shaving water. I used this and applied shampoo to my hair once, hoping to finish in sea water, but when I put my hair into it, the soap became a sticky mess and adhered to my fingers. No lather can be made in the salt water. Besides, leaning over the hot water trying to get my hair clean had made me sick again. When I went back to the room with my troubles, Alvin scouted about and found fresh water to finish the shampoo, then brought ginger ale to settle my stomach. When he opened the bottle on a drawer in the room, the ale spurted onto the floor, wall, ceiling, mirror and Alvin.

On August 2, we moved slowly along the shore of the island of Madeira, and stopped near the city of Funchal. Clouds tinted by the rising sun draped over the mountains which formed a backdrop for the city on the shore. The houses of the city were all white with red tile roofs, surrounded by palm and other tropical trees. Soon little row boats were coming to meet our ship. Three Portuguese divers in each boat invited us to throw coins into the ocean so that they could dive for them: "Good morning, sir, throw a six pence into the water and small boy dive for it -- throw a six pence into the water." One man dropped in a penny, but they wouldn't dive for that. "Hello, there, baby -- Hello, big boy -- gentlemen -- throw a six pence into the water."

After breakfast, we found sixty row boats on one side of the ship, ladened with goods for sale. After awhile a gang plank was lowered and someone called the numbers of the boats which had made application to come aboard with their wares.

August 8, the day we crossed the equator, was my twenty-second birthday. Quite early in the morning, Alvin gave to me, along with a greeting card, a small, black, leather-bound book for keeping my diary. On the page for August 8, 1938, he had written: "May this page and every other page be filled with happy and contented thoughts, joyful happenings, and bright hopes for the future." In the afternoon, our attention was called to three whales about one-half mile from the boat, and we watched them dive and spray until they faded into the distance. All day I had been feeling that something mysterious was in the air, and sure enough, Mrs. Rowe and the Browns had arranged a birthday party in the evening, complete with crepe paper streamers, cakes, gifts and "crackers" without which no English celebration is complete.

By August 11, we began to encounter the "Cape rollers" and the day was cloudy, cold and rough. Our latitude was the same as Kalomo, North Rhodesia where we were to live, about 17-00 South.

Alvin hung my shoe on a string about six feet from the ceiling and three and one-half feet from the floor so we could watch the ship sway. It made a round trip every 15 seconds, and the sway was 12 to 18 feet.

August 12 was colder and rougher. Said Mrs. Gunn, "The boat she heaved, and so did we." We were 350 or 400 miles from land, and had traveled a total of 5,402 miles. The Southern Cross was visible for the first time.

Out of the cold and dark of the early morning of August 15, we could make out the outlines of the mountains and the twinkling of many lights of the city of Cape Town at the foot of the mountain.

CHAPTER 2

SO THIS IS AFRICA!

Africa! But the sight which met our eyes was far different from the part of Africa to which we were going. Cape Town is a beautiful, modern city with Mediterranean climate, nestled beneath the grandeur of Table Mountain. To the right of Table Mountain, we could see another peak, "Lion's Head," with the back and rump of the reclining lion stretching back toward us and the sea. To our left was Devil's Peak.

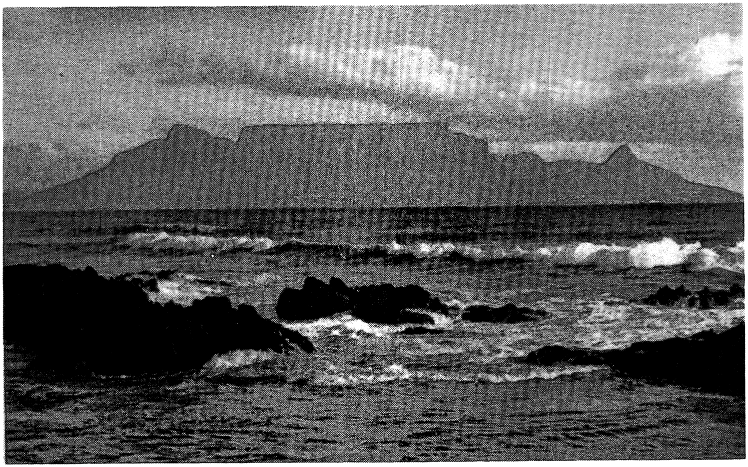


Table Mountain from Blouberg Strand

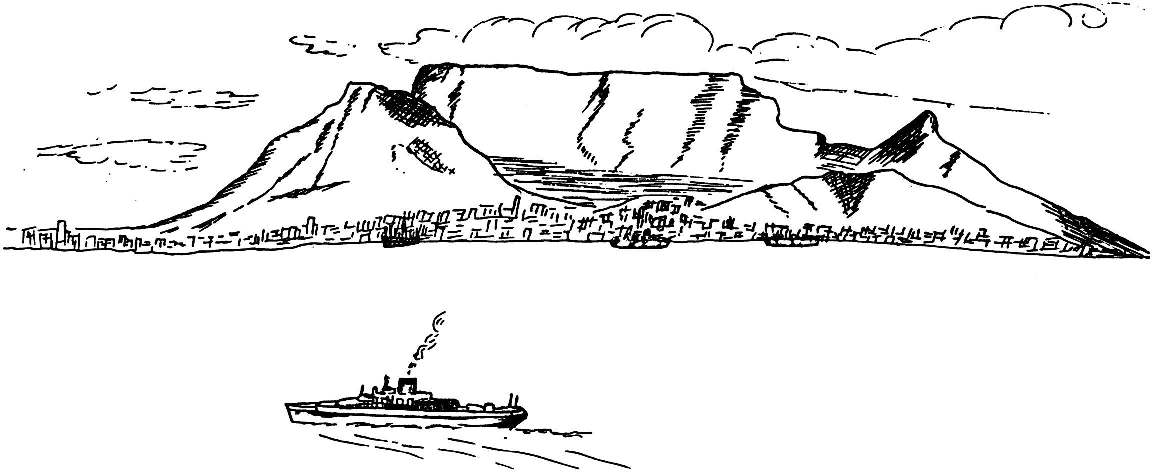
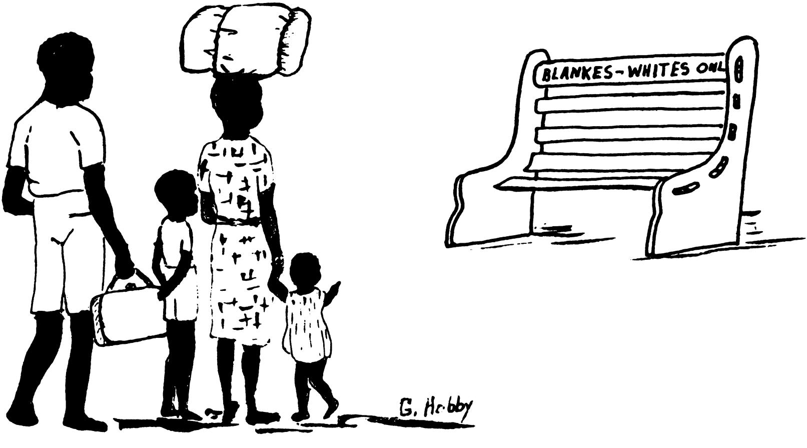


Table Mountain and Table Bay Harbour

Portuguese sailors had visited the Cape of Good Hope about the time that Columbus discovered America, but they did not live there. They named it "The Cape of Storms," and for good reason. The Dutch founded the city of Cape Town in 1652 as a supply base for Dutch East India Company ships. In addition to the Dutch, Hugenot French, British, Malay and Xhoxa came to settle in this new land.

Today, this southern part of Africa is ruled by white people of Dutch and French descent. Some of the early settlers took wives of the Xhoxa, Hottentot and other black tribes, creating a distinct class, the "Cape Colored" people. But these are not among the ruling class. In South Africa, only whites may vote in parliamentary elections, serve in Parliament and administer laws. There are only two official languages in South Africa: Afrikaans, which was developed from the Dutch language, and English, and in order to secure employment, one must speak fluently both languages.

Several families were at the dock to meet our ship, August, 1938, and they had plans about where each missionary family would stay while in Cape Town. Most of the Christian families in Cape Town were Cape Coloreds, from the middle and upper class of the "Cape Colored" category. This meant that they spoke fluently both English and Afrikaans, lived in well-kept, comfortable homes and were fairly well educated. But there were galling restrictions. Everywhere signs were posted: "Whites only." This meant that these colored (mixed black and white) people were not allowed to sit on benches, ride in trains or buses, walk through subterranian passages, eat in resturants or stay in hotels with white people. They might receive a grammar school, or even a high school education, but always in a segregated school, and they were not allowed to attend the university, no matter how intelligent they were. This would qualify them for jobs that white people now held. Their homes were located in areas designated for colored people. This government goal of "separate development" was called "apartheid," an Afrikaans word meaning "apartness." This policy of apartheid caused considerable embarrassment to us at times when we and our friends were compelled to ride in different coaches of the same train, or to sit on separate benches in the same railway station.



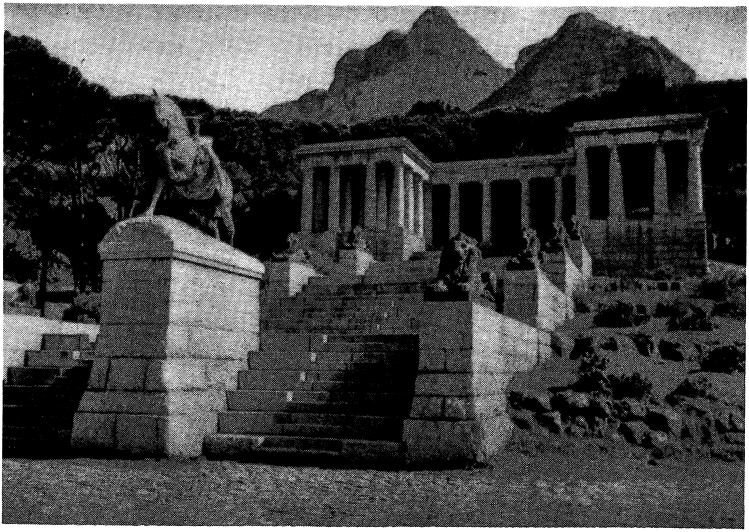
Such inappropriate value placed upon skin coloration often caused untold misery to dark-skinned children born to a colored family. A light-skinned child might be favored with piano lessons, so that when visitors arrived, the child could be put forward to entertain, while the child with dark skin remained in the back rooms of the house.

A letter from the mission in Northern Rhodesia told us that our house on the mission was being built, that the walls were to the tops of the doors and windows, and that another kiln of bricks was ready to burn. I was anxious to get started toward our future home, but we expected to be in Cape Town about two weeks, waiting for the cars of the other families to arrive by ship.

Alvin and Mrs. Rowe had been looking at used cars with the help of a friend who was a mechanic. They found a Graham Page for twenty-eight pounds, about $140.00, which they thought was a good buy, and so we and Mrs. Rowe bought it jointly.

Two weeks in the Cape Peninsula gave us time to explore. Although the Cape was a jewel of green, it was midwinter in August, and the winds were very cold. Houses were not heated, which sometimes forced us to find warmth under blankets. But at other times we took walks along the slopes of the mountain where we could look down onto the colorful city and the docks and sea below. Many of the houses were of white stucco with red tiled roofs, nestled among palms and pines, with bright flower gardens adding their splashes of color to the scene.

At the back of Table Mountain on Devil's Peak, we saw the temple-like monument of Cecil John Rhodes, and now the President's residence. In this area, too, was Groote Schuur Hospital, famous now for being the place of the first heart transplant.



Rhodes Memorial

The Cape Peninsula is thirty-two miles long and ten miles broad, and there was much to be seen outside the city.

Would we like to travel on the back of an open truck the eighty-mile "Marine Drive" which leads around the peninsula and back into Cape Town again? We accepted.

The drive follows the coast, so most of the way, we had mountains on one side and the sea on the other. Since the mountains seem to rise out of the water, the road was cut into the side of the mountain. Vegetation consisted of pines, heath, sage bushes, shrubs and flowers of all colors. Calla lillies were especially plentiful and grew wild in abundance along the roadsides. We saw many clouds hanging over the mountains – more than we cared to see, for before noon we were passing in and out of numerous rain clouds. We pulled up our collars and stretched blankets over us until we had passed through the shower.

There were great white, sandy beaches, and white sand drifts onto the sides of the hills, as white as snow.

At mid-day, we reached Cape Point, where the Atlantic Ocean and the Indian Ocean meet. Some of our party wished to climb to the lighthouse, and so I agreed to stay with the children of Mr. and Mrs. Brown who were missionaries traveling to Northern Rhodesia with us. Five baboons peeped over the rocks on a hill very close to us. They scampered about, and soon a big baboon brought six little ones across the path only a short distance away. She saw them safely across and returned. We walked to the place where she had taken them across, and looking down the hill, we could see them playing on the rocks at the edge of the water.

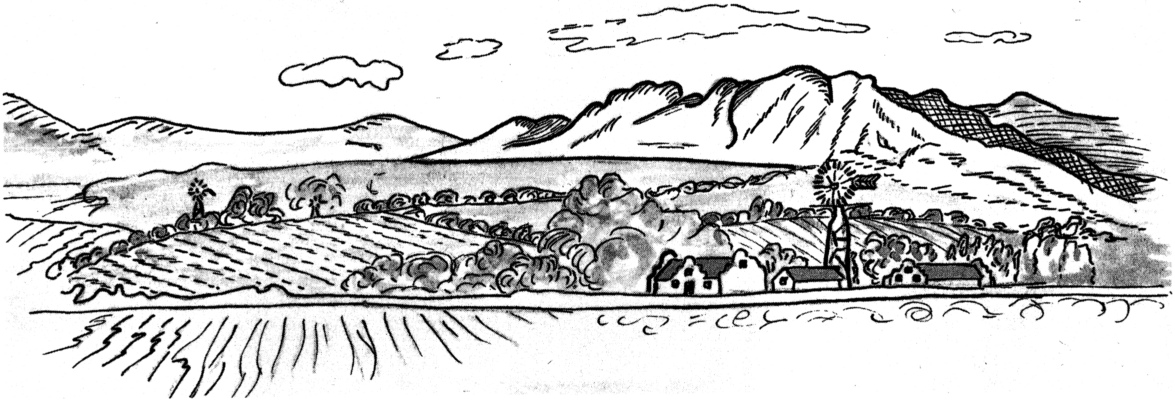
Our stay in the peninsula was nearing its end. Our cars were ready to go, and Mrs. Rowe and Alvin had passed their drivers' tests, including how to double-declutch in case their brakes failed on the mountains. Alvin and I decided to travel ahead of the Brown family to Bulawayo, since our car was older and we would have to go slower, and so we made preparations to leave August 30th. Mrs. Rowe had become acquainted with a missionary lady, Miss Coons, who was taking her new car to Northern Rhodesia, and she persuaded Mrs. Rowe to travel with her and help with the driving.

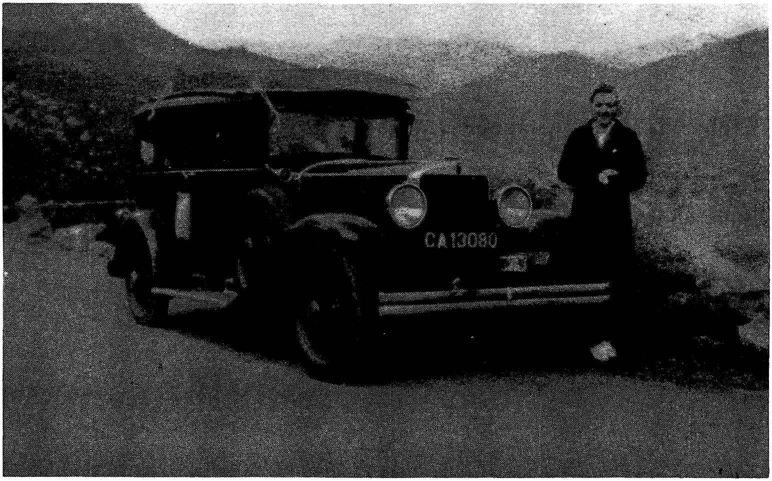
Friends prepared a tea for us and brought gifts of food: fresh whole wheat bread, cake, fig jam, fresh pineapples and grapefruit. We filled canvas water bags so as to have water for the journey -- part of the trip would be through semi-desert. It was about ten o'clock in the morning when we left; we had the Hex River Mountains to climb, and we reached them in about two hours. They were quite high, and the scenery from them was beautiful. Some of the mountains were capped with snow.

We had a flat tire just as we were over the first mountain. A man stopped and helped us repair it, and another stopped and offered to help. After we were across the mountains, we were in the Great Karroo -- semi-desert land of sand and rocks, and only a small amount of scrubby vegetation. At a garage we had the tire repaired. The sun set early and at dark we stopped just off the road near a school house and made camp. We had traveled only 162 miles, but we were tired and cold.

We had stopped near a railroad and trains passed all night. When we arose the next morning, we found frost on the ground.

An Afrikaans farm in the Hex River Valley





The Graham Page on Hex River Mountains – August, 1938

Alvin repairing a flat tire on Hex River Mountains

Before we left our camp site, a man came by and spoke to us. Alvin told him where we were from and where we were going, because he said he knew the town people would be curious, so he would just tell this man and let him tell the other people. We were still in the Great Karroo, a country of rocks, sand and small bushes. There was no life at all, either trees or houses, between towns. The mountains, too, were bare except for a few small bushes, but the rocks seemed to run in circles over the mountains, and the sunlight falling upon these painted them brown, pink, grey and purple.

We traveled twenty miles that morning without seeing a car. At noon, fields of white daisies appeared, a refreshing sight! But then, a flat tire, and thirty miles further, another. We stopped the car near a school for colored boys. Although their first language was Afrikaans, one of the boys understood our English and directed us to a garage. The split in the tire could not be repaired, and it was about fifty miles to the next town, Beaufort West. We had little choice except to use our only spare tire and hope to get to the next town before we had another flat. Some black men helped us put on the tire and pump it up.

The mountains were beautiful at sunset. One was bright pink, gradually changing to purple. We stopped at Nelsport for the night, with 175 miles and three flats for that day's record. Some black people had a camp near ours, and we saw the light from the fire. A man and a little boy and girl passed our car several times.

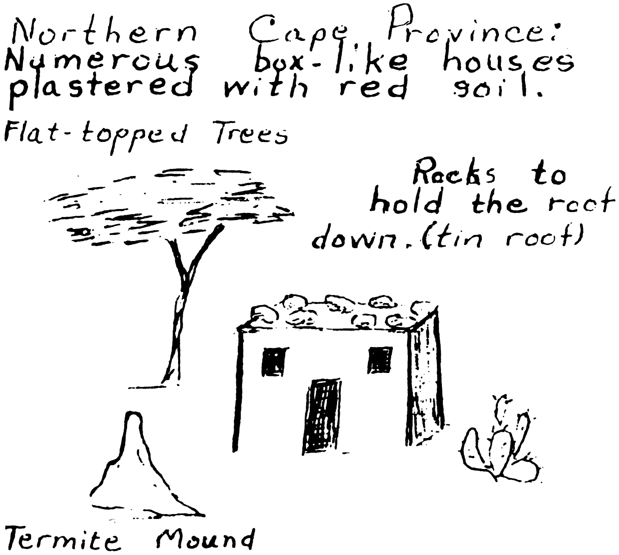
The weather was becoming warmer and more comfortable. Alvin made a better bed in the car than the night before, by building up with boxes, trunks and car seats and padding with quilts. Our camp was near white thorn bushes and on these we spread our towels and dish cloths to air and to dry.

Soon after we arose on September 1st, a little girl from the camp nearby came begging. She didn't speak English, but we knew what she wanted, and when I held up what was left of a loaf of bread, her eyes shone and she nodded. I put some butter on it and gave it to her with a banana.

The country and the roads were a little better, but there was a very strong wind, blowing the sand. We were beginning to see more animals, mainly sheep and goats grazing on the little bushes on the hillsides. The distant mountains were very beautiful. Prairie dogs and their mounds were so numerous that the animals appeared to occupy prairie dog cities. Their houses reminded me of the toad houses I had made as a child -- mounds of dirt from eight to twenty-four inches high with a hole dug out of the side to make an entrance to the house.

As we traveled, we encountered numerous gates across the road. Usually a small boy who was herding the animals would hasten to open the gate for us, and then demand a small reward.

Later in the day, we came upon fruit trees in bloom, especially pink ones which must have been peach. We also saw young lambs, many freshly plowed fields, and young, bright green leaves on willow trees. Springtime in the southern hemisphere! In the distance, over a hill, we saw a little house surrounded by bright green grain fields, pale green willow trees, pink blossoming peach -- a very pretty sight on the edge of the barren country we had just passed through.


Northern Cape Province:
Numerous box-like houses plastered with red soil.
Flat-topped Trees
Rocks to hold the roof down. (tin roof)
Termite Mound

We had fair skies throughout our journey so far, but now rain clouds appeared, and we saw ponds of water for the animals. We did not see many horses, but many burros. These hardy animals can survive by grazing on the scrubby bushes. They were used as work animals, as many as twenty of them pulling one load. Oxen, too, were used for transporting, as well as for plowing, and fourteen animals might make a span.

After we left Bloemfontein, we noted that the mountains were getting lower and we saw more cattle, trees and land in cultivation as we traveled on.

We left Vredefort at eight o'clock on September 3rd and stopped at Parys, only ten miles from Vredefort, a pretty, modern little town. A suitcase on the front bumper of our car partly hid our license number, so a policeman with the insigna "S A P" (South African Police) on his shoulder told us to remove the case. The bed springs tied to the top of the car also drew attention since coil bed springs are not used in this country.

At Vereeniging, thirty miles from Johannesburg, we parked on a main street, and while I waited for Alvin to cash a check at the bank, I had an opportunity to observe people. There were many white people and they were dressed just as Americans would dress -- many of them were dressed quite well. The black people, too, looked like Americans. On the outskirts of Vereeniging we saw what we thought was a gold smeltering plant, and a little further on, near Johannesburg, many hills of eroded white soil which had been removed from the earth during gold mining operations. Of course there was also the machinery required for gold mining.

We passed through the city of Johannesburg around noon, during rush-hour traffic. The highways were not numbered and we found it easy to lose our way. We saw two signs pointing toward Pretoria, but when we came to a "Y," we saw no directions as to which road to take. We inquired of a policeman who directed us. Johannesburg is a modern city with tall buildings, wide paved streets and well-kept parks and divided highways.

Thirty-five miles north of Johannesburg, we came to Pretoria, a large city, but not so large as Johannesburg, which is the largest city in South Africa. We arrived in Pretoria about 2:30 P. M., and again had to inquire several times to find the road out. We were spinning happily along the paved road before 3:00 P. M., about twenty-two miles out of Pretoria, when the car suddenly made a noise like the air going out of a tire, and stopped. I thought it was a tire, but we found that the trouble was in the engine. After we had speculated and worked for quite some time, a black man came to try to help us. He thought he had found the trouble and worked for a long time with no favorable results. Another black man arrived and after awhile they told us that there was a mechanic about three miles up the road. We hailed a car and asked them to ask the mechanic to come to us. The mechanic was a white man, and appeared to have found the difficulty once or twice, but none of his cues seemed to work. After working for two hours, at last he was sure he had found the trouble – a screw lost out of the carburetor so that air was being sucked in. But it was late now and the garages were closed in Pretoria. He told us that one garage would open at 9 o'clock in the morning, and gave Alvin the address. It would cost nine pence per mile for the mechanic to take Alvin to Pretoria, and much more than that to take the car in, so Alvin decided to hitch-hike the next morning to get the required screw. It was beginning to get dark, but after we had pushed the car off the road, we looked for the lost part until dark, and then Alvin looked more with the lantern, but with no success.

It was Sunday morning, September 4, and we were up at 6 o'clock to try to find that lost screw. We had hoped to reach Bulawayo to attend church service with the Sherriff family, but we had given up that idea the day before when we counted the distance and found that we were more than 500 miles from Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia. After breakfast, Alvin and I held our own church service. I searched for the screw again while Alvin prepared to go to Pretoria. Just as he was almost ready to try to get a ride into town, the Brown family passed. They recognized us and came back! They had camped less than three miles up the road the night before, and if they had gone on farther, they would have passed us in the dark. They had not had breakfast, so they unloaded and Mrs. Brown prepared breakfast for the family while Mr. Brown took Alvin and the carburetor back to Pretoria. They were gone about two hours and when they returned, it was only to say that two mechanics had looked at the carburetor and both has said that there was nothing missing! It was concluded that the car would have to be towed to Pretoria. In Pretoria, they learned that no mechanical work was allowed to be done on cars until

Monday morning, so they left the car and returned. That night we slept under the stars, and the ground was rather hard.

Late afternoon of the next day, the men returned from Pretoria with our repaired car, provisions and matches. The problem had been that the timing chain had slipped. The next morning, we left the camp ahead of the Browns, since our car would be traveling slower than theirs. However, they caught up with us at noon and went on ahead, saying that they would wait for us at the top of a high mountain at Louis Trichardt where we should be around 6:00 P. M.

We were now beginning to see more black people of a primitive kind – children wearing only a belt and loin cloth; women with eight to ten-inch-high stacks of metal bracelets on their legs. Some of the men had brass rings in their ears, and some of the babies had rings in their ears and noses. All babies were carried tied in slings on their mother's backs.

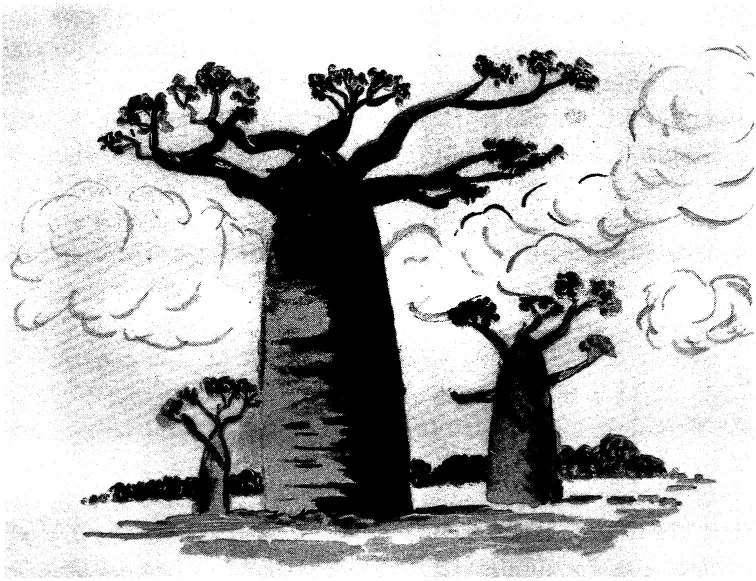
We saw several orange groves which were very pretty, but the plants which delighted me most were the poinsetta trees -- eight or ten feet tall and covered with blooms.

We reached Louis Trichardt, located on a high and rather beautiful mountain, just before dark, and found the Browns waiting for us. The moon was bright and as we were driving along, I saw something in the trees near the road which I thought was fireflies, but I hadn't noticed any before, so I looked more closely and saw that they were small buck very near the road.

The Browns passed us and waited about thirty minutes for us at Messina, nine miles from Beitbridge. We took Bernard, the Brown's baby, in the car with us and went on to Beitbridge where we passed through South African Customs and Immigration. Here we paid duty on our car. We were required to run our car through a prepared pool of disinfectant. A short distance farther on where we entered Southern Rhodesia, we were again asked many questions by Southern Rhodesia Customs and Immigrations. We were not allowed to take citrus fruit from South Africa into Southern Rhodesia. When at last we passed through the gate, some of the Browns went to a hotel. We drove on a little ways and made camp. We had supper by moonlight at midnight, and to bed, Wednesday morning!

We took extra care in dressing when we arose because we would reach Bulawayo that day. The road from Beitbridge was blacktop strips, and so the going was better. The country was now fairly level, with small trees and brush, except for the baobab trees. Some of these may be ten or twelve feet in diameter. The wood of these trees is soft and fibrous, and the tree hollow or pithy inside.

This part of Africa, unlike the Cape, has two main seasons, rainy and dry. The rains usually begin about the end of October, following a six-month drouth. We were seeing the beginning of summer, just before the rains, and everything was dry -- grass, trees and rivers. We saw a good many deserted villages, and we wondered if the people had gone to find water.



Boabab Trees

About every mile or so, we had to slow down to ten or fifteen miles per hour while crossing an iron cattle grid which prevented the cattle from crossing from one paddock into another. These replaced the gates which we had encountered in South Africa. A picture sign warned us that we were approaching a grid or a railroad crossing.

Our car did not like sand, mountains, or fast driving. It became very hot and we had to stop and let it rest while we ran to the river for water. Otherwise, it was serving us well. The people of Southern Rhodesia were hospitable and helpful, so whenever we had some small problem, travelers would not pass us by, but would stop and offer to help.

We reached Bulawayo in the late afternoon on September 7th, and were invited into the home of an elderly missionary family, the Hadfields. The Brown family was invited to another missionary home. The next day while we were shopping, we found Mrs. Rowe in town. She had also arrived in Bulawayo the evening before. We had been wondering what had happened to her and her friend. They told us that they had had no trouble at all – not even a flat tire – but had just been taking their time. They had not left ahead of the Browns, as the Browns had supposed, but a few hours after the Browns left Cape Town. Mrs. Rowe had been driving Miss Coon's green and tan Ford V8 station wagon, which was not the sort of car you would expect to see every day in these parts. But it so happened that a green and tan station wagon had gone ahead of the Browns, and some people told the Browns of seeing this car. Thus the Browns had traveled until three o'clock one morning trying to catch them and failed, but found us at the minute we needed them. I thought that this was quite remarkable, and that God was watching over us.

Before we left Bulawayo, we bought a cast iron wood-burning cook stove, an oil-burning lamp with a round wick and a few other things which were to be sent to us by train. We received a letter from Mr. Merritt saying that they hoped to have one house finished by the time we arrived, but that the money had run out, so they couldn't build Mrs. Rowe's house and she would have to share ours. Also that the new school year would start the next Monday. We were not expecting to start teaching so soon after we arrived – only one day between!

The next day, September 9, we left Bulawayo a little before sun-up. We were still on the asphalt strips, which made the going comfortable. Just about sun-up when we were only a few miles out of Bulawayo, eight grown buck came out from one side of the road and crossed directly in front of us, only a short distance away. When they were safely across, they stopped to look at us.

The car was moving along well on the stripped road when suddenly we heard something "bang." We stopped and looked back, and Alvin's tin suitcase had fallen off the bumper, broken all to smash and the things in it were strewn "from Cape to Cairo." I emptied the tub that had bags of provisions in it, and we filled it up with cards and papers and clothes that were now dirty.

Much road work was being done, trying to lay the asphalt strips all the way to Victoria Falls from Bulawayo, but they were neglecting the dirt roads to get the strips finished, and sometimes we thought that our old bus would be shaken to pieces. There were also many detours, and so we were sometimes directed onto a little dirt road detour through the woods.

Alvin stopped the car to make some little adjustment, and when he tried to start the engine again, it refused. He coaxed and pushed and did everything he knew to do, but still it balked. A taxi driver came along, and although he had a customer in his car, he got out and worked for a long time. Several other cars stopped and offered to help. We were afraid it was the timing chain again because it behaved exactly as it had before, and the taxi driver was also afraid that it was the timing chain, so he went on when we told him that two other cars of our company would be coming, and we thought that the only thing to do was to have the car towed about forty miles to a garage.

While we waited, two trucks came along, driven by black men, and they offered to help. After examining the engine, they said it was not the timing chain. They had been working on it for some time when a white man stopped to help. Mrs. Rowe and Miss Coons had also reached us during this time. After further work, the men found the trouble. When Alvin stepped on the starter, the engine sprang into action, and what a happy look on Alvin's face! We had lost two and one-half hours already, but we decided to drive on to Victoria Falls before stopping for the night. Mrs. Rowe went ahead of us at Wankie, saying that they would find us a good camping place. The roads were very rough, but I was so tired that I fell asleep. Just before we reached the Falls, we passed through a Customs gate, but it required no time. We asked where huts could be found for spending the night and were told that there were some across the Victoria Falls bridge. Before we reached the bridge, however, we saw signs pointing to a camping ground, so we drove to it. It was a very beautiful place with many palm trees and other plants bordering the Zambezi River. It was dark, but the moon was bright and I could see the palms by moonlight. I would have liked to have stayed here, but we didn't find Mrs. Rowe, so we crossed the bridge on our way to the huts. Soon after crossing the bridge, we came to Customs in Northern Rhodesia, and it took some time to complete the paper work and clear ourselves here. When we reached the huts, we did not see Miss Coon's car. It was late, so we drove into some trees and camped. This was also a very pretty place by the river. We cooked supper, and about midnight the Browns came by. They had left Bulawayo at 2:00 P. M. and were just catching up with us. Since the mosquitoes were plentiful at our camping site, the Browns decided to camp a little farther up the river.

The next morning, September 10, we were up at 6:20 surveying our camping place. We were camped alongside the wide expanse of the Zambezi River, not far from the

Victoria Falls. Green, wooded islands were in the river, green grass, and trees of many kinds, including palms, were on the river banks, and the spray from the Falls rose as a backdrop to this magnificent scenery. As we were finishing our breakfast, the Brown family came along and had breakfast also. We cleaned our camp and were about ready to leave when an official came and told us that camping was not allowed there!

We crossed back over the bridge to have a daytime look at the Falls. We were told that this was an unusually dry, dry-season and therefore the Falls were not very full. Still, there was much water flowing over. We walked along the edge of the gorge, through the "rain forest" where rain falls all the time due to the action of the Falls. But the Falls cover a large area, and we did not have time to see them all. We wanted to take pictures, but the day was the cloudiest we had seen in Africa.

Victoria Falls Bridge

From Victoria Falls, we went to Livingstone, eight miles away, and there we saw the Browns again, and Mrs. Rowe. At Livingstone, we had more Customs and Immigrations to pass through. We had some work done on the car, went to the bank, bought groceries. Around noon, we left Livingstone ahead of the Browns and Mrs. Rowe, headed for our new home at Namwianga Mission near Kalomo, eighty-two miles away.

CHAPTER 3

OUR FIRST HOME

About three o'clock, we came to Kalomo. It was a little larger than I expected. There was a garage, bank, grocery store, drug store, and a post office. The grocery store was well-stocked with provisions. We stopped to wait for the Browns and Mrs. Rowe, and while we were waiting, one of the black teachers from Namwianga Mission, Nawa, came and asked us if we were the Hobbys. He spoke good English and appeared to be young. He told us that they had been expecting us for a long time, and that our house was finished.

When the Brown family arrived, many of the native people gathered around to greet them, for they were returning missionaries. When Mrs. Rowe arrived, the three cars proceeded to the mission, about three miles from Kalomo. The Merritts were living in a house where the Brown family had formerly lived, and so we went there first, but on the way, Nawa pointed out our house to us. We had been at the Merritt home for only a short time when Mrs. Scott, who lived on a hill about a mile away, came, and all of us went to see our new house.

We thought it was a fine little house, made of red burned brick which had been moulded and burned on the mission. It had a big living room with a fireplace, a bedroom, kitchen, back porch and a screened front porch which ran the entire width of the house. The kitchen had a recession into the back wall for the wood-burning cook stove. The walls were plastered and the floors were made of concrete. Some painting of the walls and woodwork remained to be done. Mrs. Scott had supplied our house with a cook stove, some beds and a few benches to use until our furniture arrived.

Some excavation had been completed for the foundation of Mrs. Rowe's house, very near our house, but she would share our house until hers was built. The living room would be her bedroom, and we would both use the kitchen and other facilities which included an outdoor toilet. The Merritts invited us to have our meals with them until we could get supplies of wood and water -- wood from the forest and water carried in buckets from the river some distance away.

After supper at the Merritt home, there was a welcome meeting for us at the school house. The African people had been expecting us and looking forward to this meeting for a long time. There were sixty-five or seventy people present, and songs and welcome speeches went on into the night. Each of us was required to make a speech also, which was interpreted into the African language -- a new experience for us, but an experience which became commonplace over the years. Of course speeches made in the African language were interpreted into English.

Sunday morning with the Merritt family, we had corn meal porridge and antelope for breakfast. Sunday afternoon, we were given a tour of the mission. Our conclusions were that there were prospects and possibilities for a great work, but that much work, funds and equipment were needed. It was thought that the school might possibly, in a year or two, be recognized by the government, and then the African teachers would receive part of their salaries from government funds.

On Monday afternoon we had a meeting of the missionaires, organizing the work and choosing a missionary-in-charge. Mr. Merritt was chosen for this post, Mr. Brown to be in charge of the medical work; Alvin, principal of the boys' school, Mrs. Rowe to be principal of the girls' school when it opened and she had learned the language. I would assist Mrs. Rowe as a teacher in the girls' school.

How does a bride arrange orderly housekeeping in a far country where there is no electricity, water, refrigeration or any of the other conveniences of modern living? I had expected it to be worse. My father had pointed out to me that in the slide presentations which he had seen of the country, there were no crops, and that "a little time can seem to be a long time if one is hanging by the thumbs." And so I was pleasantly surprised to find the country liveable at all, and gleefully wrote home glowing accounts of "breezes that came into my kitchen as if blown by an electric fan."

At the time we arrived at the mission, I was twenty-two years old, Alvin was twenty-eight, and Mrs. Rowe forty-two. So she was like a mother to me, and a more ingenious, self-sufficient co-worker I could not have had. It seemed that she could take whatever she had at hand and turn it into something useful. We were able to obtain plyboard tea boxes and other wooden boxes from the store in town, and so Alvin and Mrs. Rowe made crude, temporary furniture from these. I had never had my own house before, and improvising furniture from packing cases and plyboard tea boxes was fun!

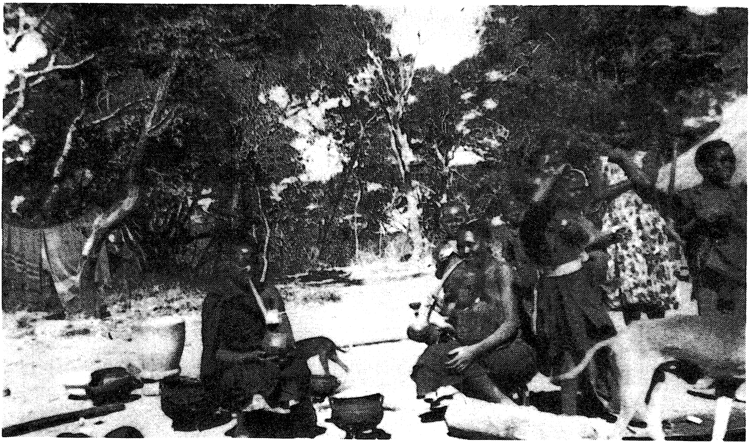
The missionaries shared food of all kinds with us -- fresh and canned fruit, vegetables, meat, bread. Dried meat and fresh ripe mangoes were new tastes to us. Our grocery bills were never high due to the sharing done by the missionary families who had established gardens and fruit trees: orange, lemon, grapefruit, mangoes, guavas and pawpaws.

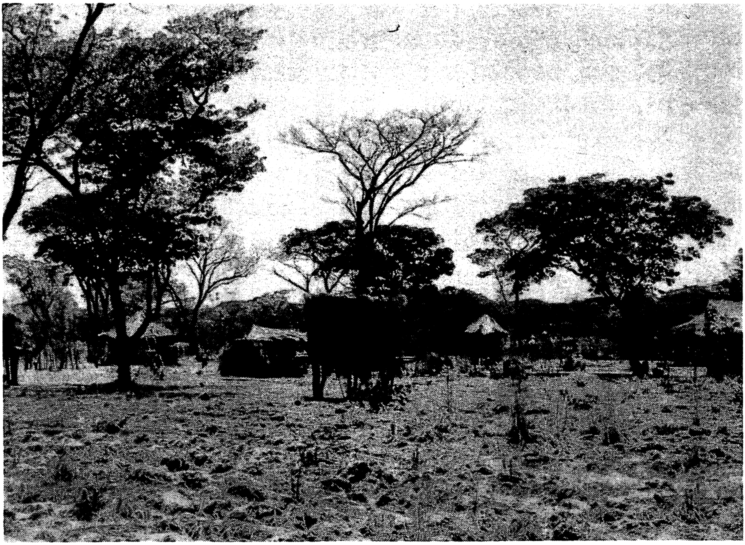
Mr. Scott was preaching in the villages when we arrived at the mission. He arrived home Sunday night, and we found him to be very jolly and likeable. He wanted no part in the school except to encourage it. Mrs. Scott already had a small school for white children, and so would be unable to help us with the school for African boys and girls.

We chose Nawa for our language teacher since we were anxious to be able to communicate in the language as soon as possible. This may have been a mistake since Tonga was not Nawa's first language, but we didn't think about that. Nawa came to the class dressed in white shirt, tie and trousers, and sometimes a jacket. We found the language study interesting, and sometimes studied for two hours instead of one.

It is a custom of the Africans to choose an African name for the missionaries, which describes the missionary as they see him, and this name is used when they discuss the missionary among themselves -- a favorite leisure pastime. Alvin was soon given the name "Siatontola," meaning “the quiet one.” Mr. Merritt had been given the name “Manglazi” meaning “the one who wears glasses,” and although he had not worn glasses for ten years, the name had stuck.

We had been at the mission only about a week when we had our first introduction to village life. The father of the Merritt’s house servant was ill, and Mr. Merritt invited us to accompany him to the village, thirty miles away. This village was typical of many that we saw in subsequent years: adults sitting in the shade, near-naked children, dogs lying about. The people seemed happy to have visitors, and quickly brought out their best chairs for us. We used our very limited vocabulary in speaking to them.





On our return journey, Mr. Merritt shot a reedbuck at about 160 yards. We saw the reedbuck's mate and another buck, but did not kill them.

Nawa came daily for our language study class. He had dim marks on his face, which at first I thought were ordinary scars. All of the women had marks on their faces, and some of the men did, too, although this was not so noticeable on the men. These marks distinguished tribes and families. Many of the adult women had their upper front teeth knocked out, but I wasn't sure whether this was merely custom or whether it was a beauty measure.

"Beauty is in the eye of the beholder" regarding dress, too. One student came to church in his best Sunday attire: short trousers, shoes, half-socks, and wrap-around garters in stripes and plaids of many colors. A large, dignified-looking student found a pair of bright, rose-colored shell frames for glasses and wore these frames to school. A woman from a nearby village came to church with a chain of safety pins across the front of her dress.

Almost daily, the Scotts or the Merritts or some other of our white neighbors would send us fruit and vegetables from their gardens. When Mr. Merritt killed an antelope, one of the hams came to us and we preserved a portion of it by canning it in our pressure cooker. The Scotts shared their home-made jam, and Mrs. Merritt gave us a yeast starter which we used for baking our bread. We were able to buy fresh meat in Kalomo one day each week, and we learned to preserve it for several days by additional heating and cooking each day until it was consumed. It was necessary to boil all milk to purify it, and this usually preserved it until the next day. If some remained, we boiled it again the second day, and in the hottest weather, it was necessary to boil it both morning and evening each day until it was used. Root vegetables, such as carrots and turnips, were kept fresh by burying them in a four-gallon tin of sand. All of our drinking water was boiled and cooled before drinking it, since it was river water, and untreated. After the water had been cooled to lukewarm, canvas water bags were filled and hung in the air where evaporation cooled the water to a pleasant temperature for drinking.

Since Northern Rhodesia was a British colony, British social customs were followed, and so it was with chagrin that we awoke one morning, remembering that we had failed to serve hot tea to our visitors, the Websters, the afternoon before! The Websters were white farmers who lived some three or four miles away. Each day, one of the students walked to the Webster farm to buy milk for us, and quite often Mrs. Webster would send us additional foods from the farm. Our "European neighbors" were good people, and although we did not see them often, they were a source of comfort to us.

Besides being our language teacher, Nawa was a valuable informant regarding the customs and affairs of his people. Their food and eating habits were quite different from ours. Nawa told us that he and his wife spent about ten shillings ($2.50) per month for food, which consisted mainly of meal made from corn and other grains, such as millet. This they cooked into a thick, unsalted mush, and with it they ate a small amount of "relish," usually a savory, salty soup made from green leaves and peanut flour. Soup made from meat was a rare delicacy. But Nawa said that "European foods" did not satisfy his appetite – he must have his insima, and that he could eat large servings of it.

Mealtime at school. Serving up bowls of insima from the large cooking pot (1943).

Although polygamy was legal among the Africans, Nawa said that it was not widely practiced because "one wife is bad enough." A favorite subject for debate among the students was whether an educated or an uneducated wife was better. Nawa, personally, preferred a wife with less education than himself so he could teach her things. If she were educated, he said, "she would be proud and bossy."

Debates at school were a regular Saturday night feature. They provided entertainment and practice in the use of English. Another subject for debate was whether or not taxes should be paid. We had been on the mission about a month when Alvin gave a memorized speech in Tonga on debate night. The students' big eyes "stood out on stems" from surprise. Then they made a speech about Alvin.

Student dormitories at the primary school,
Namwianga Mission -- 1945

Our students attended school for one-half day, and they worked at some manual labor the other half to help pay their school expenses. One of the most difficult jobs for the missionary was to find jobs for all of these students, and then to supervise their work. A partial solution to this dilemma was to send a few students to work at the home of each member of the staff, and their work could then be supervised by the individuals at that home. Consequently, some of the students came regularly to our home to work. Since water had to be carried from the river, wood had to be brought in from the forest and cut into pieces, concrete floors needed polishing with red wax, clothes washed by hand, grass cut by hand, gardens dug with a hoe and such other slow and primitive methods of accomplishing things, it was always easy to find work for the students who came to us. We also chose some of the more promising students and taught them to wash dishes, sweep floors, iron clothes and to do other household tasks. We could never have found time to teach in the schools if we had had to do all of this work. But training these people and supervising their work was in itself time and energy consuming and it could at times be extremely frustrating. A new house servant, who had never seen a wood stove, might light the fire in the oven instead of in the fire box, and he would probably take the dirty dishes to the yard to scour them with sand, as is their practice in the village. Our few possessions made us appear to be rich, and there was a constant drain on our cutlery and other things that we had in seeming abundance, and which would not be readily missed. Since there was a new set of workers morning and afternoon, we found it impractical to take inventory twice a day to find the culprits. Sometimes we put notes around. In the sugar canister: "Good boys do not steal sugar." It was understandable though, that these things were a sore temptation to the students whose diets were so monotonus.

Saturday afternoon and Sunday, the students had a change of activity. Saturday afternoon there were intramural and inter-school soccer games. Since we were accustomed to watching football, we found it amusing to watch the students butt the ball with their heads. Mrs. Merritt served tea to all of us at half-time.

The students felt that since they were in an English medium school, they should choose an English name to add to their African name. One of our workers named himself "Maggie." Another scholar was named "Pumpkin," another "Sawmill." They also chose such names as "Sugar," "Salt," and "Pencil Jam."

By the time we had been at the mission for a month, new plans were taking shape. The most outstanding one was the plan for the arrival of a new baby in our home in early April.

Mrs. Rowe and I took walks to the river to search for white quartz stones to border our flower beds, and to find shrubs and trees suitable for our yards. Citrus fruits grew well in the area, as well as mangoes, guavas, plantanas, mulberries and pawpaws.

Kabanga Mission was fifty miles farther into the "bush" away from the railway line. At an earlier date, the Short family, the Merritt family, and the Lawyer family had lived at Kabanga Mission, but by 1938 no missionary family was living there. A tragic accident had occurred at Kabanga in 1927 when Lawyer started on a hunting trip with his spear. Some dogs followed him, and as he tried to drive them back, he fell on his spear and died as a result of the wound, leaving a wife and two small daughters. They returned to the States. After the departure of the missionaries from Kabanga, the church and school continued there under the supervision of Mr. Merritt.

In October, 1938, Mrs. Rowe, Alvin and I were invited to accompany Mr. Merritt on one of his visits to Kabanga, and he sent word ahead that he was bringing us to visit. The news had circulated for many miles, so that people came from all around that area to see the new people from overseas. About 250 were present at the church service. Both Alvin and Mr. Merritt were asked to speak, and after the church service, three school choruses sang . . . and sang . . . and sang to us. They had composed most of the songs and some were welcome songs composed especially for us. On our return to Namwianga that evening, we saw nine small antelope and eight large sable antelope.

On October 11th, we had our first shower of the rainy season. Since this was the first rain that had fallen for six months, it was a thrilling occasion and excited everyone with hopes of another "growing season." The smell of damp soil filled the air, and seemed to add to the expectations and hopes. However, this shower did not mean that the rains had actually started and that we could begin to plow and plant immediately. Three weeks or a month might elapse before the actual rainy season began.

During this time, there were numerous whirlwinds which sometimes hit the house and beat it full of sand before we had time to shut the doors and windows, then it spiraled along the road, lifting the sand and vegetation.

If the rains should be unduely delayed, many Africans would pray for rain by dancing around the graves of their ancestors and pouring beer on the graves.

Alvin's birthday was coming up, October 20, and so I bought from Nawa a chicken for one shilling to cook for the birthday dinner. Mr. Merritt sent me a coop to keep it in -- a teepee shaped coop with a round base woven of pliable sticks and tied together with tree bark. Sticks joined to the base came together, forming a pointed top, all interlaced and tied with bark -- an ingenious use of local, free materials.

Mr. Scott gave each of the three of us a cow. Highly bred stock was impractical in this climate. Mr. Scott had built on his farm a cattle dip -- a long, narrow trench filled with insecticide dip into which the cattle were submerged each week to kill the ticks which often caused cattle diseases. Weekly dipping was imperative, even for the hardy, indigenous cattle, such as the ones Mr. Scott had given to us. Cattle were raised for beef and for work oxen, so they gave very little milk above the requirements for their young.

Mr. Merritt commented that the reason we were gaining weight was that we got so much "food" from the river water that we drank. This might have been said of the milk, too, especially during the heavy rains. After the cows had lain in the muddy kraal all night, the students who did the milking were not too careful to cleanse the udders of the cows and so the milk came to us in a despicable state. Standing, straining, boiling, made it more acceptable, but far from pure!

Mrs. Rowe and I began missing chunks of bread and cake from our bread boxes. We mentioned this to Mr. Merritt who asked Madabula if he had seen those mice. He also told Madabula that if he could not do a better job of keeping the mice out of our bread and cake, we would have to find another helper in the kitchen. Madabula stiffened and told Mr. Merritt that he had not seen the mice.

Washing dishes in a white man's kitchen gave Madabula a new dimension in his life – a chance to see, taste and feel all the strange kitchen things belonging to the white man. It would sometimes take him two hours to wash a few dishes, which I could have done easily in thirty minutes. And so I washed the dishes with Madabula just watching, stressing the importance of cleanliness and completing the job with clear, shining glasses. A few days later I saw him hold up a drinking glass toward the light, and when a stubborn spot remained on the glass, Madabula wet the corner of the dish towel in his mouth and cleared off the offending spot.

Madabula soon gave up his kitchen work, and so I had to train a new student. When asked why he didn't want to work for us, he said he thought he had caused us enough trouble, and the cake looked so good that he couldn't refrain from eating it.

Once a week or so, Mrs. Rowe and I made a trip to Kalomo, three miles away, in our jointly-owned car to purchase supplies at the general merchandise store. Along the way we collected pretty quartz stones to border our flower beds. At the government post office in Kalomo, we were surprised to find that our time was twenty-five minutes fast. Alvin began the construction of a sun dial, marking it every fifteen minutes, so we were then able to keep correct time, part of the time!

During October, Alvin had been constructing from boxes in his spare time a library-table-desk. It was our nicest piece of furniture, so far, and I was thrilled with it. In the center he constructed a well for our portable typewriter. On each side of the center, a drawer, and low across each end, a shelf for books. Later, I covered the top with vinyl and we continued to use it all the years that we were in Africa. It was still a sturdy piece of furniture in 1982.

CHAPTER 4

VLEIS, VELDS, AND A NEW HOBBY

Migrating storks, traveling from Europe to southern Africa, arrived in Northern Rhodesia in flocks at the time of the first rains. The rains caused the termites to swarm in great numbers, and these provided food for the "rain birds," swallows, chickens and people. One night we noticed a man frantically collecting something from the ground and popping them into a bucket of water. It was "flying ants," as the large king and queen termites were called. After a winged mating flight, these insects lost their wings and fell to earth (or inside our houses, en masse). If they were not collected quickly, they crawled into holes in the ground and the chance of a delicious meal was lost. I did not taste them, but I was told that they have a high fat content, and when roasted, a delicious flavor.

Wild fruits ripened about the time of the early rains, and wild parrots were attracted to these. We heard their noisy, raucous calls as they flew over the house.

Another bird which seemed to fit into the setting of our home was the ground hornbill. I loved to awake early in the morning and hear them "converse" with one another across the vlei -- the male in his deep, bass voice which resembled the grunt of a lion, answered by the female. This continued for quite some time, usually in the early hours of the morning.

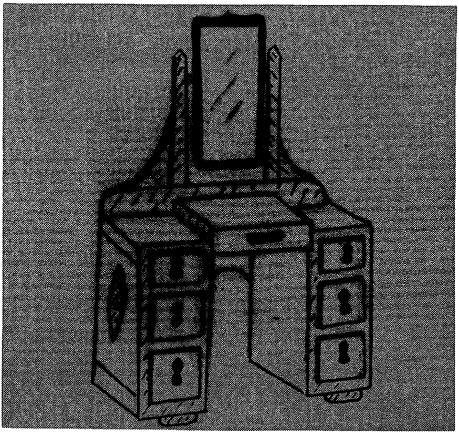
One enjoyable recreation for us was roaming in the veld behind our house. Here we found all sorts of strange plants, wild fruits and flowers, wild guinea fowl and animal spoor. The candelabra or euphorbia tree was one common, but interesting sight. Wild fig trees were loaded with fruit which afforded food for the birds and animals, but were not suitable for us, because they were full of insects. Other wild fruits we found to be edible and enjoyable: mutenga, masuku, insumo, and others. At the beginning of the rains, the "girl flower" blooms -- a red, fluffy ball about four inches in diameter which shoots from the ground on a strong stem about six inches long.

After the rains came, it was plowing time and the Scotts sent oxen to plow our garden. Some weeks earlier, I had planted seed in small beds so that the plants could be transplanted when gardening time came. These seed beds had to be protected from sun, rain and chickens. A number of factors made gardening a more difficult job than it is in some places: poor soil, heavy rains and hot sun. When we planted carrots, lettuce, spinach and such small seed which produced tender plants, it was necessary to build shades over the beds. This was done by cutting sticks about two and one-half feet long with a fork at one end. One end was pushed into the ground at the corners of the bed, and then long sticks were laid across the forks, forming the framework for a roof. Sticks were then laid in both directions and a layer of thin grass over all. The grass layer might be thinned as the plants became stronger, but if the frame was not solidly constructed, when the wind and rain came, the whole structure would fall. Chickens preferred these shaded areas for scratching, since the soil was softer and more moist, and so our gardening efforts were often a failure.

I had begun, by the end of October of our first year, to teach through an interpreter, a Sunday Bible class for ladies. The women walked from a village about eight miles away. Sunday morning church services unavoidably provided us with incidents of special interest: the choice of Scripture readings which began in the center of one topic and ended in the middle of the next; an egg or an ear of corn placed on the offering plate. The stream where baptisms frequently took place was known as "Jordan."

Lenses were one of Alvin's special interests, and he used this interest in several ways over the years. His first experiment, during his first teaching year, produced a moving color picture of the students. Using quilts and rugs to darken the room, Alvin put the lens of his glasses in one window. I stood inside and held a white cardboard at the right distance for focusing. Alvin let one half of the class go outside and walk about. We on the inside had a colored moving picture (upside down) of everything those on the outside did. It pleased the boys very much to see each other on the screen.

Necessity generated Alvin's ingenuity and creativity around our home as well. He had never been trained to do carpenter work, and probably that was just as well, for a professional carpenter would be reluctant to start work with the tools and materials that were at hand -- hammer, saw, screw driver, packing cases, boards, and large plyboard tea boxes. During our first year, in his spare time, he built most of our furniture: desk, dining table, bed, three kitchen tables, cupboards, book cases, wash stand, lamp stand, dresser stool. All of them were constructed to last a lifetime, which they did. His masterpiece was the dresser which he presented to me our first Christmas. It was constructed entirely from packing cases and plyboard tea boxes. It had three large drawers on each side and a small drawer in the center. Sides of the drawers, and sides and top of the dresser were plyboard. Handles for the drawers were hand-carved, and curved ornamental parts were patiently cut out by using a nail on the end of a string. Upright pieces held in place an adjustable mirror. We stained and varnished it and used it all the years that we were in Africa. When we left, this "treasure" which would have been of little value in the marketplace, was given to our friend, Elaine Brittell, who had been in that country almost as long as we.



The Dresser

The Community Christmas tree was a big event each year, for every white family for miles around congregated at the "club house" on the outskirts of Kalomo. For us, it was the only time during the year that we saw our white neighbors. Each family contributed refreshments for the event. Weeks before, we had turned in our children's names, along with money to buy gifts for them. These were delivered by "Father Christmas," whose arrival climaxed the occasion. Sometimes he arrived in an ox cart and sometimes in an air plane, but always wearing the traditional suit which was saved from year to year.

A prominent family in the area, the Horton family, lived some ten miles away. Mr. Horton had come from the U. S. A. many years before, had married a white South African woman, and together they had acquired a large farm in Northern Rhodesia which was called "Lion Kop Ranch." "Kop" means a hilltop, and from this vantage point we could see for miles. We were invited to this ranch for tea on Christmas afternoon, and after tea we enjoyed the view. Christmas comes in mid-summer south of the equator. The African laborers were having their own celebrations about one and one-half miles away with beer-drinking, drums and dancing.

We had intended to return home early, but sometime during "tea" it occurred to Mr. Merritt that an invitation to "tea" meant an invitation to supper, and so no one made a move to go. Alvin and I became alarmed, but stayed on, and finally a big Christmas dinner was served. The table was beautifully decorated. When pudding was served, I found eight "tickies" (small coins) and six charms in my serving. There was classical music and gaity. It was only years later that we learned for sure that we had not been expected to stay for the Christmas dinner!

In early March, 1939, Mrs. Rowe and I traveled to Livingstone, eighty-five miles to the south, by train to wait near the hospital for the arrival of the baby. In March, the end of the rains are near and the weather is beginning to become cooler. Livingstone is an old town on the Zambezi River with an elevation of three thousand feet, a thousand feet lower than Namwianga Mission. The weather here can be very hot in the hot season, but in March the temperature was pleasant and Mrs. Rowe and I enjoyed long walks every afternoon, to see the trees, shrubs and flowers of this town. After a month of waiting, however, I was becoming very homesick and lonely for Alvin.

Early in the morning on the first day of April, Mrs. Rowe uttered an exclamation. Alvin and the Merritt family had arrived in our old car. They had left the mission the afternoon before, but deep mud holes had caused them much trouble on the way. Alvin's legs were skinned and muddy as a result of his efforts to extricate the car, and when these efforts failed and it became clear that they could not reach Livingstone that night, they all slept on the ground.

We arranged for Alvin to stay with me, and for Mrs. Rowe to return to the mission with the Merritts to take Alvin's classes. On their return trip, they had similar problems and had to camp by the road at night. David was born the next morning – arriving at his destination before the Merritts and Mrs. Rowe arrived at theirs.

During the month that I was in Livingstone, Alvin had been constructing a baby bed. It was a fine little crib with a side that would slide up and down. But the most ingenious feature of it was the "springs" which were constructed of very thin, narrow strips of wood woven together in such a way that they would spring without breaking.

Many of the African students had never seen a white baby, and so after we returned to the mission, David had many visitors. Some of them signed the baby book when they visited, and we collected such names as "Spider," "Sawmill," "Matches," and others.

In the same month, April, of David's birth, Mrs. Merritt discovered a lump which proved to be breast cancer. Although every available treatment was tried, in both Northern and Southern Rhodesia, the malady claimed her life in less than two years.

A shady playpen constructed especially for David.

CHAPTER 5

INTO THE VILLAGES

The school year ended in April, and April was the beginning of the dry season. The dry season in Africa has its own peculiar charms, and after the rains, when the smell and the feel of the cool, dry days appeared, we began to feel the lure of the villages and the open country.

The mission operated several lower primary schools in the villages, and it was in the dry season, during the long school vacation, that Alvin found his best time to visit and inspect these lower primary schools. A number of the schools were located in the vicinity of old Kabanga Mission where there had formerly been missionaries, and where there were two unoccupied "European" style dwellings. Alvin planned to use Kabanga Mission as a base for traveling by bicycle to Simwatachela, Jokwe, Siamafumba, Cidi, Mulamfu, and Siamwamvwa villages, where he would visit and inspect schools by day and preach in the open court near campfires in the evening.

In June, 1939, Mrs. Rowe and I decided that we would like to accompany Alvin to Kabanga Mission and remain there for two weeks. This required a lot of planning and preparation. On Thursday, June 8, we loaded an ox cart with provisions and equipment that we would need during our stay, and it started on its fifty-mile journey. It would arrive on Saturday.

Mid-morning on Saturday, we left in our old car, and accompanying us was Noah, our faithful house-servant who had never before ridden in a car. The car had three broken springs. We had it well loaded and the roads were rough, so we traveled very slowly. Noah became nauseated and we had to stop. He didn't like the bridges at all, and he thought that the car traveled much too fast. By the time we reached Kabanga, word had spread that we were coming, and many village people were waiting to greet us.

The people here, fifty miles from a town or the railway line, were usually more primitive than those we had seen near Kalomo. Some of the women wore reeds through their noses, a red, greasy mixture smeared on their skin and hair, and a halo of cowerie shells set amongst the sticky braids. Men and women, too, wore ear rings and white and brass bracelets on their arms and legs.

Noah swept the dirty, unoccupied dwelling house and we set up housekeeping the best we could with the boxes that we had brought with us. We cooked on a pressurized kerosene stove, and hung diapers on the grapefruit trees. That night we discovered that there were other occupants of the house -- a large family of owls in the attic.

The next day, people came from far and near for treatment of their minor ailments. There was a small shop at Kabanga, and many of the people came to trade. A teacher's wife brought all of the women to see the white baby. I had all of David's diapers piled up to wash, and the women thought: "What an awful lot!" Their babies wore no diapers, and often not even a shirt. The women watched closely as I fed David, and a man standing at a distance said: "Uh huh, you didn't know a white baby would suck, did you?"

A favorite past-time of some of the women was smoking a large "hubble-bubble pipe" -- a small clay pipe containing parched corn or tobacco, and embers, mounted upon a large gourd. The smoke from the clay pipe was cooled by the water in the gourd, which continually bubbled and gurgled as air was drawn through the water by way of the long handle on the gourd.

When Alvin returned from visiting the villages and schools, he had a surprise for me – a little goat that the chief had given him. We named her "Mabala," meaning "spots." Alvin had eaten very little of the food which he had taken with him. Chickens and eggs were supplied him by the village people. Forty-eight people had been baptized that week.

Mrs. Rowe and I decided to have some classes for the women while Alvin was away on his second trip. All of them wanted to see the baby, so I held him up and told them that he had never had sore eyes, itch, cold or any illness. Then I told them how to prevent these things.

There was a death in a nearby village, and when this happens, everyone comes from surrounding villages to help wail. Sometimes the death drums continue to sound for a week.

The people brought us their various craft items which were for sale -- beaded belts and bracelets, a carved wooden stool, clay pots which had been decorated and fired, a gourd pipe.

Mrs. Rowe and I sometimes walked to nearby villages to visit with the people. To more remote villages, we traveled by ox-cart. One evening we walked to Siamwatachela's village, two miles from Kabanga, where Alvin preached. It was cold, and the men sat around their campfire while the women huddled around their fire, some distance away. Each individual woman came, knelt near us and clapped her hands in greeting. We asked to see Fred's mother and we told her that Fred, a student at Namwianga, was a good boy. She was delighted and continued laughing. When the meeting was over and we left the village, the chief accompanied us for some distance, followed by all the children from the village.

June 24, our last day at Kabanga, students and teachers came in from all directions. Each school gave a "concert," which was mostly singing, very loud singing, followed by dancing.

At lunch time, the inevitable stiff cornmeal mush was served. The girls passed around a bowl of water in which each of them washed her hands. Then without further ceremony, they ate with their fingers from a common bowl. Etiquette is very strict, however. When one pinches off a small protion of the mush, she rolls it into a ball with one hand, pushes an indentation into it with her thumb and dips it into the bowl of relish. The small depression retains a bit of the relish, and she pops the whole ball into her mouth. To bite off the ball of "insima" or mush and dip it again into the relish would be an absolute breach of good etiquette! When the meal was finished, a bowl of water was again circulated to remove food from the fingers.

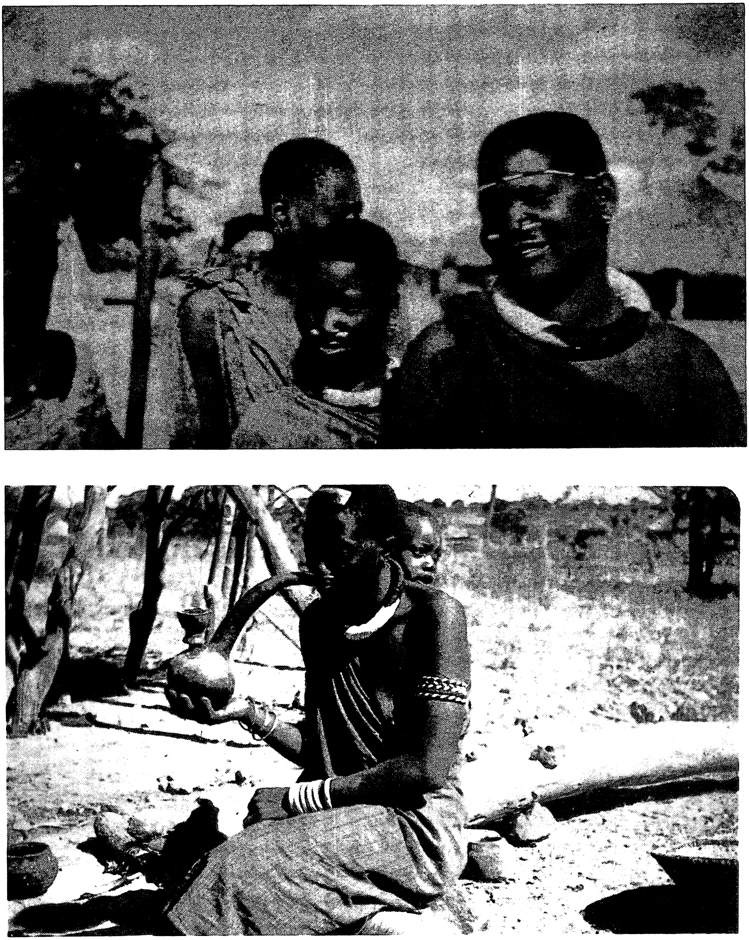
When we returned to Namwianga, Mrs. Rowe's house was nearing completion and she began to move some of her things into it. Alvin continued to construct furniture. He painted the kitchen tables and cupboards white, and we put new oilcloth on the table tops and fresh curtains around one table and at the windows. What a transformation!

In early July there was frost and ice which killed our tomatoes, beans and plantanas. Some winters were free of frost, and I had taken that chance and lost, after spending a lot of time caring for the vegetables. Carrots would be the only fresh vegetable that we would have until November.

Little Madabula, our first kitchen help who had wet the dish cloth in his mouth to take a spot off a glass, lived near Kabanga and had carried lots of water for us during our stay out there. He seemed to like us and smiled a lot. We regretted to receive word a month later that he had died. Since there was no one to diagnose, we never knew the cause. But to an African, there was no such thing as death from a natural cause. All illness and death resulted from witchcraft.

In subsequent years, Mrs. Rowe, Alvin and I made other similar trips to the old mission station where we camped for a time in one of the vacant dwellings. One vivid memory is an encounter with a cobra which was coiled in a corner of our camp-room where baby Paul was sleeping. When I rushed in to remove the baby, the cobra spat in one of my eyes. Mrs. Rowe used milk to wash out the venom. Gradually the pain subsided and the following day I was again able to open my eyes.

Village people – Georgia and David near grain storage bins



Women from the Kabanga area and
Zambezi Valley area – 1953

CHAPTER 6

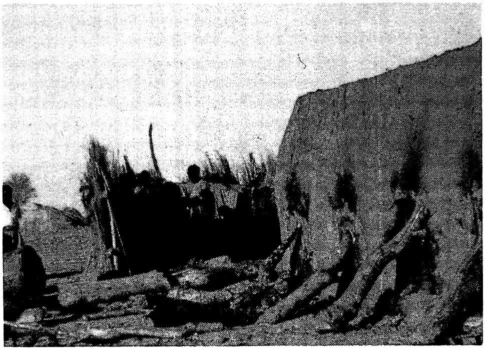
A SUNLIGHT PROJECTOR

A boarding school requires that much building be done. There must be dormitories for the students, classrooms, dwellings for the missionaries and the African teachers, store rooms and work shops. It would have been impossible to order the necessary building bricks, and so it was necessary to mould and fire them on the mission.

The first step in this long process was to find a termite mound that appeared to have the right sort of dirt for making bricks. Buildings were never constructed of wood, for the termites would quickly devour them, so we made use of our adversity by using the termites' houses to make our own! A good sized heap of dirt was required to make enough bricks to build a house, then enough water had to be hauled from the river to wet it. Sometimes a pug mill, turned by oxen, was used to mix the water with the clay.

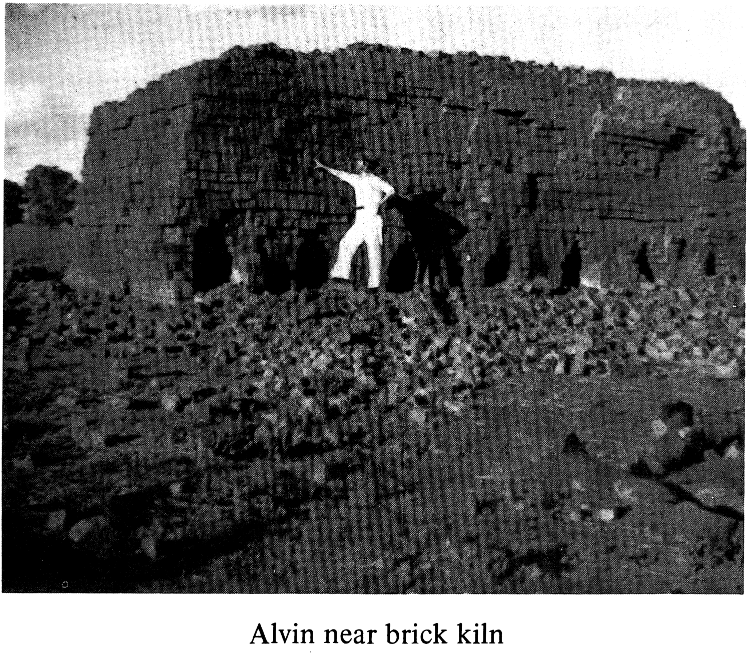
When bricks were burned in a kiln, small standard-sized brick molds were used. If the building was to be made of unburned "kimberly" bricks, a mold about ten times as large was used. Workers threw the mud forcefully into the mold (so as to fill the corners and not leave air spaces), the excess mud was scraped off the top, and the resulting mud-cake was deposited on the ground and covered with grass so that it would not dry out too quickly, and the bricks were then left to dry in the sun.

There is an art to stacking bricks into a kiln for burning. The way they are stacked depends upon the number of bricks to be burned and the kind of fuel to be used. Usually a kiln contained about fifty thousand bricks and was fired with wood. The bricks were stacked so as to leave four large tunnels through the bricks at the base. The completed stack was twelve or fourteen feet high, and during the burning process, it was necessary for each brick to become red hot throughout. This required an unbelievable amount of wood – wood which was cut and hauled in from the forest. We didn't live in a "jungle" as some people thought. Our wood supplies on the mission were becoming low, and so we thought twice before we decided to use wood to fire the bricks.



A brick kiln

The completed stack was plastered all over the outside with mud, and the huge ovens filled with wood and set alight. Then the doors of the ovens were sealed with bricks and plaster. Twice a day, those doors were broken down and the fiery furnaces filled to the brim again with wood, for the burning could not abate for an hour, day or night, until it was completed. This required four or five days. When grass, thrown upon the top of the kiln caught fire, we knew that the fire had found its way throughout the kiln, and the burning was finished. The bricks were left to cool at their own rate, which required about a month.



Alvin near brick kiln

Grain storage houses

When coal was used to fire the kiln, the coal was laid in layers with the bricks throughout the kiln. Small holes were left around the bottom for lighting the coal, and once it was lighted, the kiln was left to burn. It was not refueled during the burning process. Coal was also difficult to obtain because a permit first had to be procured from the government.

Most burning of bricks was done during the six month dry season. Building, too, was done during the dry season, and especially if unburned kimberly bricks were used.

Almost all of the buildings which were constructed in the early days of the school were of small, burned bricks, and construction of buildings was a continual on-going work, supervised by Mr. Merritt.

By the opening of our second school year, in August, 1939, enough buildings had been completed for the girls' school to open. Not many came the first year because a boarding school for girls was unheard of, and the parents were reluctant to allow their girls to leave home. A strict code of conduct regulated male-female associations, and the parents did not know whether this would be adhered to in a school where there were both male and female students. They soon learned that they had nothing to fear, and that their girls were better chaperoned (by Mrs. Rowe) than they were in the villages. After that, our enrollment in the girls' school increased rapidly. In those early days, the boys and girls did not attend classes together. The girls' dormitories and classrooms were surrounded by a high, security wire fence and the dormitories were locked at night. Letters were to be passed through Mrs. Rowe for censoring. Dating was something unheard of in this culture where marriages were arranged by the relatives.

One day when I was teaching home crafts to the girls, a young man appeared and asked if he might sit in my class. He was looking for a wife and wished to observe the girls. I invited him in and continued with the class. At the end of an hour or two, he had chosen three possible candidates, the three whom I considered the least intelligent of the group. As I remember, when he investigated them, they had all been spoken for already. But if he had found one who was eligible, the road leading to a marriage satisfactory to all the relatives was a long and arduous one. The young man was not to approach the parents of the girl directly, but a relative, perhaps an uncle, would act as a go-between. Young men were required to pay for the bride over a long period of time, with work, cattle and money, to the parents and other relatives of the girl. They also paid for the girl's wedding dress and for the food for the wedding feast. One young man ordered from a mail order catalog, a fine European-style wedding outfit from England, white gloves included, and I kept it at my house for many months until he could complete all the arrangements for the wedding. The idea for European-style wedding garments probably did not originate with the missionaries, but from the Africans' observation of European weddings, and from seeing these garments in mail order catalogs from England and South Africa.

In another instance, after all arrangements had been completed and chickens killed for the wedding feast, the parents refused to let the prospective groom have the girl. Over the years, the parents and relatives of girls became so greedy and demanding that young men simply could not afford to go along with their demands, although they would have liked to be married honorably. This has resulted in elopements and illegal marriages and a general breakdown in traditional marriage and family groups.

In the 1930's, it was traditional for relatives to make arrangements for the girl's marriage without her knowing whom she was to marry, or when, because if she should discover the identity of her future husband, she might run away from home and hide. Somehow all of these customs resulted in another custom, which was that the girl appear to be very sad on her wedding day. Even today, it is considered the height of ill-manners for a bride to smile and appear happy at her wedding, or even to speak in reply to the usual questions asked her by the minister during the wedding ceremony.

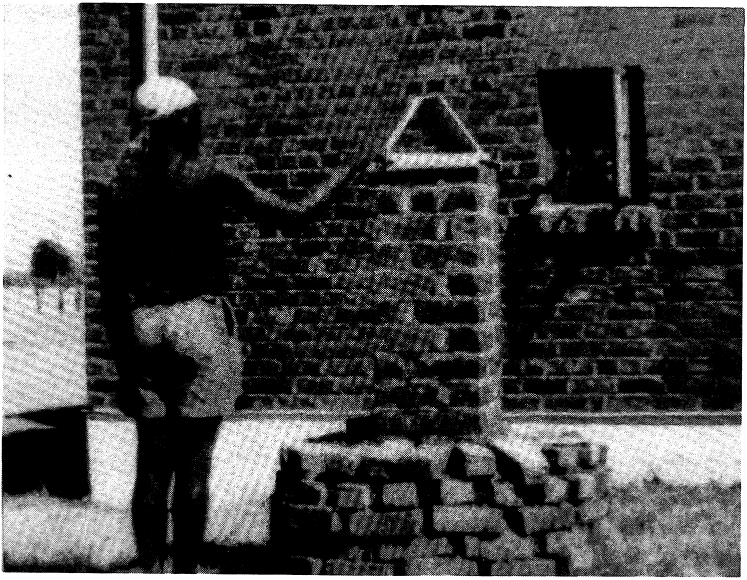
Today, (1982) in church services, men and women segregate themselves and sit on opposite sides of the church building. This is a hangover from the old traditions which are in rapid transition among the young people, where in school, the sexes mingle freely and the young people often make their own selection of mates. Although this has its desirable aspects, the changes in the social order of male-female relationships has progressed so rapidly that the young people are ill-prepared to meet them, and it is resulting in much immorality among the African young people, as well as in broken relationships of poorly established marriages.

Mrs. Merritt died of cancer in the early months of 1941, and our second son, Paul, was born in Livingstone in June of that year. Since June was school vacation time, Alvin was able to accompany me to Livingstone when school was dismissed in April. Due to some miscalculations, we waited six weeks in Livingstone for Paul's birth, but he was fine and strong and we were happy.

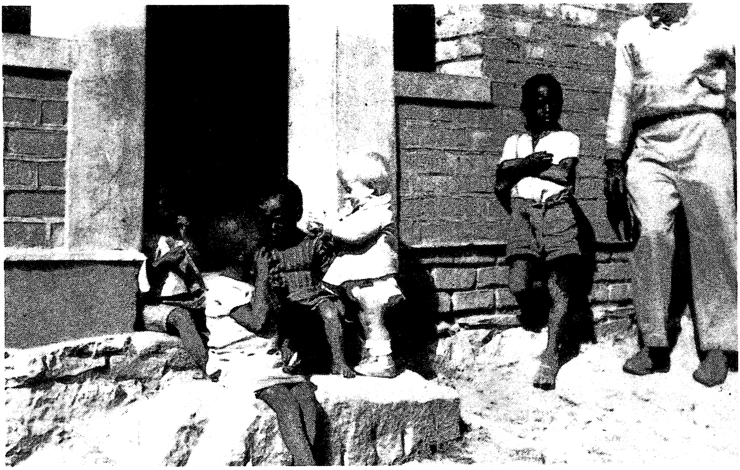
Alvin had a special interest in astronomy, and in lenses. His next special project was to grind the lens for a six-inch reflecting telescope. Because in whatever he undertook, he did very careful and precise work, and because this was not his first attempt to grind the lens for a telescope (he had made and set up a smaller one in Tennessee some years previously) the result was rewarding, both in a job well done and in the amazement and appreciation showed him by the African students who had never before experienced the wonders of telescopic vision!

Neither had the students seen teaching pictures projected on a screen. Alvin used his experience with lenses to create a sensation -- a projector fashioned from parts of an old movie projector, which used sunlight for illumination. He was able to use this effective teaching aid, both in the mission school and in the village schools where he regularly visited and inspected the work. In order to carry the outfit by bicycle into the villages, he made it fit inside a four-gallon paraffin (kerosene) tin. Additional equipment included tar paper shades to cover the windows and darken the room, a bed sheet to use as a screen, and a mirror mounted outdoors in such a way that it could catch the rays of sunlight and reflect them into the projector. Since most visiting and inspecting of schools was done during the dry season, clouds seldom posed a problem. An African helper was trained to stand outdoors near the mirror and to move the mirror as necessary to keep the sun's rays trained on the opening at the back of the projector.

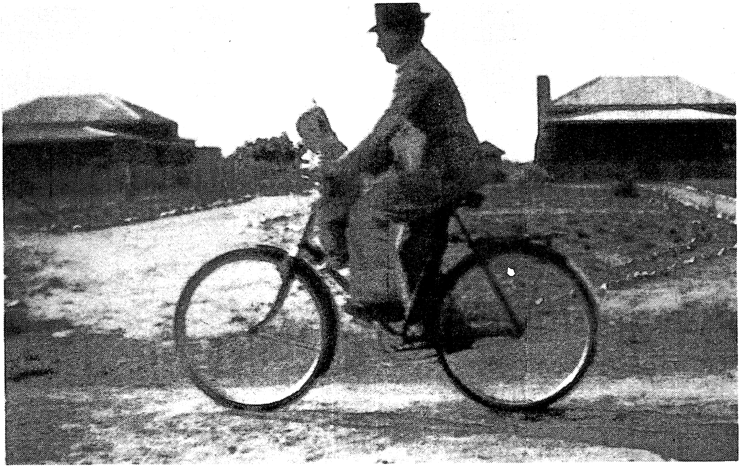
When pictures were scheduled to be shown in the villages, the entire village would turn out for the show, crowding into the classroom and sitting on the floor until every space was taken. The Northern Rhodesian government lent us filmstrips for teaching history, geography, health and general knowledge. These included such subjects as "The Life of David Livingstone," "Clean Milk," "Yourself and Your Body," "Capital World Tour," etc. The government offered a choice of about 130 subjects. We bought Bible filmstrips which illustrated the first eighteen chapters of Matthew, and others illustrating stories from the Old Testament. A Chinese proverb says: "A picture is worth a thousand words," and this when the Chinese teacher's speech was understood perfectly by the students. How much more was this true in our setting where language barriers were an ever-present difficulty.



The student is turning a revolving mirror on the stand to reflect a beam of sunlight into the projector in the window.



David with friends at Kabanga Mission



Mrs. Rowe's house (left) and Hobby's house - Alvin taking David for a bicycle ride - Namwianga Mission - 1940

CHAPTER 7

AFRICAN STUDENTS AND AFRICAN LANGUAGES

Young people are young people -- many of them intelligent, industrious, and ambitious, reacting to situations in ways that would be expected. Did they enjoy a good laugh? Sometimes a bit perverse, as when one of the dignified young teachers slipped and sprawled in the doorway. Did they have pride? You could hardly take a picture of them unless they were wearing their best. How hard they worked at school in order to have a silver star placed by their names! A school program was always long because so many wished to appear on the program, rendering their songs, memory work and speeches with long English words. They were willing to work at any kind of work for four hours a day to pay for their food and schooling. In order to have money to buy school supplies, and for church contribution, more hard work might be done all Saturday afternoon, their only free time.

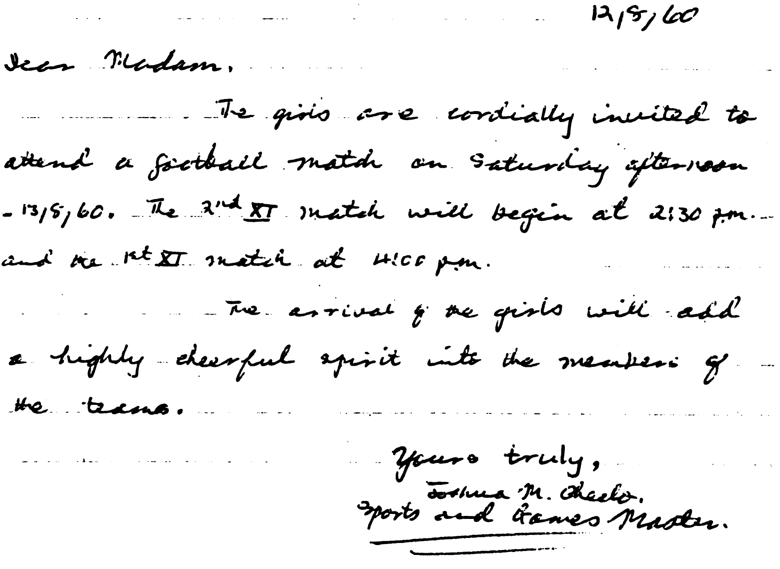
Since Northern Rhodesia was a British colony, English was the official language. There were about 70 tribes in Northern Rhodesia and 8 major dialects collectively called the "Bantu languages" which were spoken in the villages and in the native courts. But it was generally considered that to be educated, one must speak English -- so much so that it was considered almost an insult to speak in a Bantu dialect to one who had been to school. Classes in the upper school were conducted entirely in English, and the students pursued the study of the language eagerly. The use of long and difficult English words, however inappropriately, gave the students a sense of achievement and superiority. The students asked Alvin to find an English poem containing big words, for them to memorize. "Crossing the Bar" and the "Chambered Nautulis" didn't qualify, but "The Waters of Ladora" delighted them.

An albino African student returns with other students from a baptismal service at "Jordan." Note the girls' uniforms.

One pupil submitted a list of words and asked to know the meaning of them: disabuse, clamorous, premonition, compliance, discontenance and contemplating. This was no surprise. The surprise came when the student innocently asked that all be put into one sentence!

When an English class was asked: "Any questions?" one boy asked: "What's this?" pointing to his abdomen. Alvin said, "shirt, belt . . . button." No. He began to pull out his shirt to show him, and Alvin said: "Oh, that's the navel."

At the end of the school year, the boys planned a "feast." The one hundred students collected about six dollars among themselves, and Mr. Merritt sold them a cow for meat.



12/5/60

Dear Madam,

The girls are cordially invited to attend a football match on Saturday afternoon - 13/5/60. The 2nd XI match will begin at 2:30 p.m. and the 1st XI match at 4:00 p.m.

The arrival of the girls will add a highly cheerful spirit into the members of the teams.

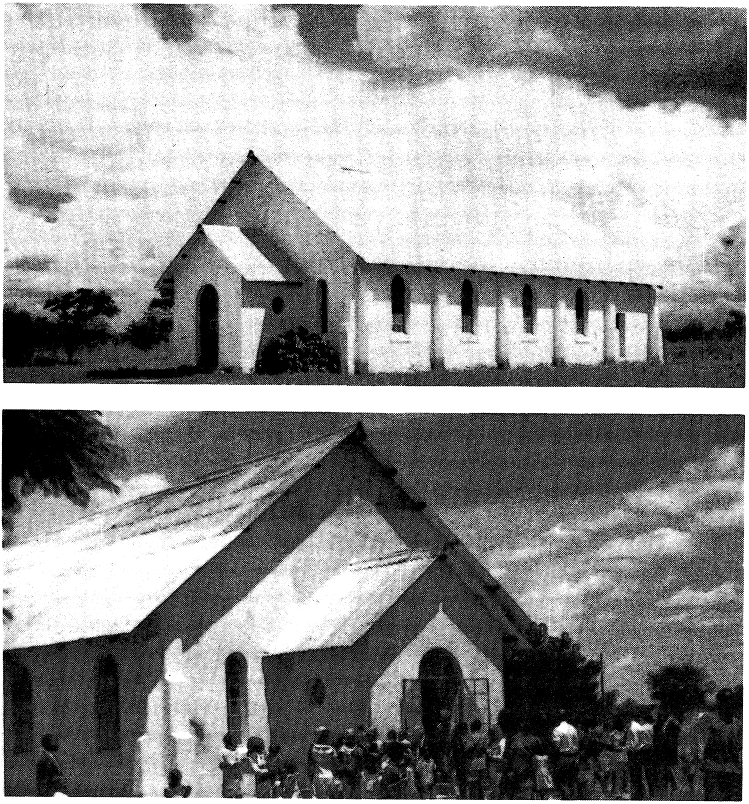
Yours truly,
Joshua M. Cheelo.
Sports and Games Master.

Usually, the students sat on the ground with their bowls of corn meal mush and "relish" (perhaps greens, peanuts, beans or pumpkin), but not on feast night! Benches brought from the school house made seats and tables and the meal consisted of four courses. Each student had a bowl like an enamel wash basin, and for the first course this was filled with rice and meat, flavored with curry. Second course was a refill of the same thing in the same basin. Third course was a large piece of bread with gravy, and for the fourth course the basin was filled with very sweet tea. Before the banquet and between the courses there were school songs. "Waiters," chosen from among themselves, were frequently called by the students. Two guests from Kalomo wore stiff formal collars and ties.

But there was one "first class" table which was different. These boys had paid more (perhaps fifteen cents). They had a high table and spoons. Their plates were piled high with food, and they received special attention from all.

The songs and feasting lasted until midnight when the many small fires which dotted the feast ground died down and the happy students went to their dormitories to sleep.

In 1942, teacher-training was added to the school program at Namwianga with Alvin as the only instructor. In fact, there were two teacher-training courses. After completing Standard IV (sixth grade) a student was eligible for a one-year teacher training course, called the JTC or Junior Teachers Certificate course, and after completion of it he could teach grades one through four in a village school. Those who completed Standard VI (grade eight) were considered quite well-educated, and were allowed to enroll in the two-year teacher training course, known as the ETC or Elementary Teacher Certificate course, and this enabled them to teach grades one through six in a village school.



The church house at Namwianga Mission, built by W. N. Short with help from others.

By training teachers in our own schools, we were able to give them more Bible instruction before they, in turn, taught Bible to the young ones in the villages. This greatly improved the effectiveness of the work that we had come to do. Namwianga Mission operated fourteen village schools, three mission schools and two schools in towns, with a total enrollment of about a thousand girls and fifteen hundred boys. Keeping these schools operating, which included the building or buildings, delivery of books and supplies, assignment of teachers, delivery of the teacher's monthly pay check, general supervision of teachers and schools, required commitment and team work among the missionaries. In addition to Mr. Merritt, J. C. Shewmaker and Leonard Bailey did a great deal of this work. Mr. Merritt describes one of the visits to a school:

> "For some time there had been requests for a school at Siacongwe Village, so in May we sent a teacher there to open one and after he had been visited a couple of times by our Jeanes Supervisor, we decided that it was about time for some of us to make an inspection.
>
> "Siacongwe is, as the crow flies, about fourteen miles south of Namwianga, but by the way that brother Hobby and I made the trip on bicycle, it must have been twenty-four miles going, and twenty coming back – we got lost going.
>
> "Early on the morning in which we began our journey we gave our bedding rolls and grub boxes to carriers who started immediately straight across the

hills, but we took a route by the East and did not start until nearly noon. We took our coats, a bag of water and a small lad for a guide.

"About half way up many of the hills we would dismount and push, for that was easier. At the top we would take the guide up behind and let him ride down to the foot, which in one case was well over a mile. He liked that and would not have objected to a ride up the grade as well.

"I have talked about our 'guide' and for that purpose we took him along, but he did not know the way. He was only thirteen and had gone to Siacongwe by another road three years before. However, we did not know this until he started losing us. Four miles is not a great distance to have to travel, ordinarily; attached to the wrong end of twenty miles over hills, it is not the same. We came to the village at 4:30 and had to wait a half hour for the carriers to arrive with our supper.

"After preaching to some fifty people as they sat around large fires in the village 'street,' we went back to our camp outside the clearing where we made our bed in the lee of a large antheap. The next morning, we found thick frost on our pillows.

"We went to the school for inspection at 10:00 and were on our way home an hour later, had boiled eggs and tea for lunch at noon, and arrived home sore, tired and dirty at 3:00 p. m."

NOTE: In 1942, Mr. Merritt married Helen Pearl Scott, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. George Scott, and soon afterward they began work at Kabanga Mission.

Mutwanjili Village school house, teacher and students

Our third son, George Alvin, was born in Livingstone, November, 1943. We now had David, nearing five, Paul, about two and one-half years, and baby George. By training the students to help with washing, ironing and house work, I was able to continue teaching a few classes in the girls' school which was just across the road from our house. There were no modern conveniences, no refrigerator, or electricity or running water and plumbing. Water was carried up from the river and heated in four-gallon tins on a wood stove in the kitchen. Wood was hauled from the forest by ox-cart, and during the rainy season, dried out in the oven before use.

The car that we had driven from Cape Town, which was jointly owned by us and Mrs. Rowe, had long since been traded for two bicycles and two hand-wound record players. Alvin bought a bicycle for me, too, my first. But with three small children, I could never go far from home, and so I seldom left the mission, even to go shopping in Kalomo. A note was sent to the store in Kalomo each week, and after a few hours the student who had taken the note would return with our groceries.

Life, however, was never boring or lonely. One day we glanced across the road to where the girls' dormitories were located and saw the girls moving in lines back and forth like ants. What could they be doing? We learned that they were creating "furniture" in their dormitories where there had been none. They were carrying the small burned bricks into their dorms and constructing beds with them -- pillows and all! It was an ingenious idea, but I'm not sure how long they were allowed to enjoy the luxury, since the bricks were to be used in building.

Mrs. Rowe was as desirous as the girls that they have furniture, and furniture began to take shape -- tables built of small sticks and poles; cupboards made from wooden boxes and plyboard tea boxes; coat hangers from reeds, tied to poles with strings. Many of the girls brought with them cardboard suitcases in which were kept their personal possessions and blankets, which required folding each school day and spreading on the grass for sunning on

Saturday. There was a daily inspection of the dormitories, and good-housekeeping charts, decorated with old Christmas card pictures, kept strict account of the brownie points so that prizes could be awarded for the best-kept houses. Sometimes the boy students were allowed to visit and inspect the housekeeping – a powerful incentive to neatness!

One evening Mrs. Rowe asked me to come to her house. One of the students was quite ill, but the girl denied that she was pregnant right up to the time that her baby was born. After that, there were occasional "pregnancy checks."

The classes that I taught the girls included health, hygiene, child care, anatomy, and sex education of sorts. It was common belief that a fetus was located in the stomach, and so a pregnant woman should not drink hot drinks for fear of burning the fetus. Eggs, one of their plentiful sources of good protein, were taboo because it was believed that eating them would cause sterility.

As I worked with the girls and learned more of their customs, superstitions and needs, I wrote a little book called *Lessons for African Parents*. My college work had been in home economics, especially in nutrition. Three children of my own had given me experience, but the admonitions in the book touched on family relations as well. I knew that it was common practice for wives to return to their mother's villages for weeks or months, resulting in a husband's unfaithfulness. It had not occurred to the wives that they might be at fault in the matter.

Alvin translated, with African help, *Lessons for*

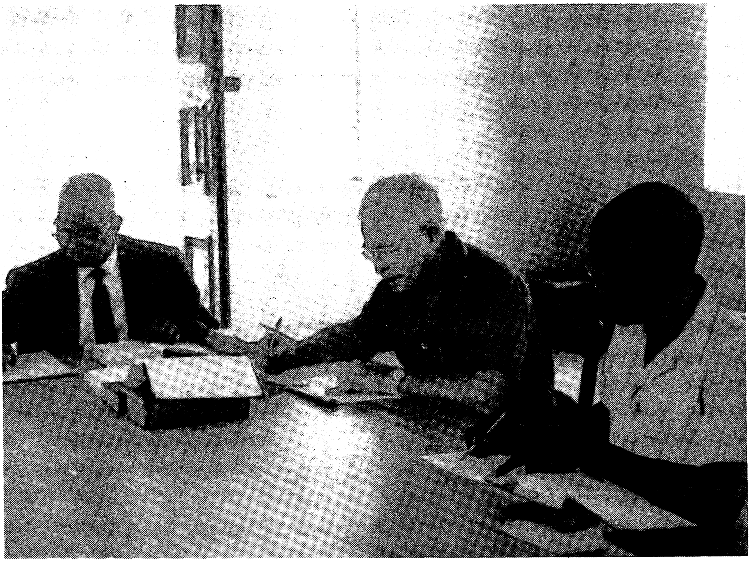
African Parents to Tonga and arranged for the publishing of it by the United Society for Christian Literature in England. Since it was subsidized by the Society, the price was such that the literate people were able to afford it.

Old Testament Stories, which Alvin had translated, became a war-time casualty when an English ship carrying the entire printing was sunk in 1943. It was reprinted in 1945 and a third impression was made in 1950 by United Society for Christian Literature. This book was used as a fourth grade reader in all village schools throughout the Tonga-speaking area of Northern Rhodesia, except for the Catholic schools.

Other publications in the Tonga language, translated by Alvin, were *New Testament Stories*, *Munali*, a story of the life of David Livingstone, *A New Creation*, which was a book especially for new Christians, *Pilgrim's Progress* and an *English-Tonga Phrase Book*.

Most important of all was the work being done on a translation of the entire Bible into the Tonga language. Although Alvin did only a small portion of the actual translation himself, he served on the committee that was undertaking this great task, and when it was completed, twenty years later, he and an African were the two who did the final proof-reading of the manuscript. This proof-reading required a year to complete.

Language is an enigma. Some feel that a missionary should become quickly fluent in speaking the language of these people. We studied their language over a period of more than thirty years, at first regularly and intently, later through reading, translating and typing many manuscripts.



Bible Translation Work

And although we were able to converse in it and teach in it to a degree, we never became "fluent" in the use of it. We saw many missionaries come and go, but only the young people who had grown up in the country with African playmates were able to speak the language as an African would speak it.

You might ask: "How can a primitive and uneducated people devise such a complex language?" They didn't. After observing this phenomena, I became convinced that God created languages, and that all existing languages have evolved from these which He gave to men. The Tonga language which we studied has a complex grammatical construction with eight or nine classes of nouns, each pronoun agreeing with its noun class. Whereas in English we say "it, she, he, they, etc.," regardless of the noun, in Tonga, each of these pronouns is different, depending on the noun being used.

Plurals of nouns are formed by prefixes rather than by suffixes as in English, and the prefixes must agree with the class of noun being used.

Such Tonga words as *citima* (steamer, meaning "train"), *ibbuku* (book), *Insondo* (Sunday), *tebulu* (table), *ibbodela* (bottle), are adaptations of English words.

CHAPTER 8

SNAKES AND WITCHCRAFT

The African people have learned to walk noisily through the bush and to keep a close watch for the "Kankuni" or the poisonous snake which camouflages itself as a small stick, the meaning of its name. I visited with a nurse in the Zambezi Valley who was feeling very depressed. An old African man had come to her clinic with a small wound. When she asked him what had caused it, he replied, "kankuni." The nurse treated him for a splinter wound, not for snake bite, and it was only after his death that she discovered her mistake. Although its poison is extremely potent, the snake itself is mild and inoffensive.

Once when we were walking through bush country with one of our African students, he spotted a Kankuni Snake in a tree. We would never have noticed it. He used a whip and accurate aim to bring it from the tree and to kill it.

Cobras and puff adders are the most commonly seen snakes, since they frequent houses and barns in search of mice. The puff adder is sluggish and does not attempt to escape. Once when fighting a grass fire, Mr. Hobby and some students came upon a puff adder. They did not have the tools or the time to kill it at once, so they threw a gunny sack over it and when they returned, it had not moved.

The most dreaded and least seen of African snakes is the black mamba. Mambas are alert and quick, but not aggressive unless molested. Their venom is a powerful neurotoxin and a bite would be fatal if not treated properly and instantly.

While most African snakes are poisonous, death from snake bite is rare. Possibly, more than their venom, Africans fear snakes because of their association with witchcraft. When Alvin was Principal of the primary school, an African teacher came to him in much distress, telling him that someone was trying to bewitch him. He knew that this was true, he said, because he had found a live cobra snake on his desk, and it was still there. He could not consider killing it, and probably he thought that Alvin would be unable to do so. Alvin killed the snake, but I doubt that he succeeded in convincing the teacher that witchcraft was not involved.

One whose culture and background is not totally African cannot fully appreciate or understand the many fears and superstitions with which these people live from birth.

During our first term in Africa, the girls' boarding school was across the road from our house. Late one afternoon there was a shower of rain accompanied by considerable thunder and lightning, as well as a little wind. But none of these seemed to cause the girls any concern. However, after the storm was all finished, and everything was calm again, all the girls came running across the road and onto our front verandah, bringing plenty of mud and sand on their bare feet! We could not understand what the trouble was. But after entering our front verandah, some of the girls kept looking around the corner toward the east; and it was then that we discovered that there was a bright rainbow in the east and that the girls had come to our house for protection. They were not afraid of the thunder, lightning and wind, but they were afraid of the rainbow!

We tried to find out why this was so. Some gave one answer, some another and we are not sure yet if we were given the correct answer. Some said that the old people in the village believe that there is a big snake at the foot of a rainbow, and that if this snake bites a person, he will die. Others said that the old people believe that the rainbow is a sort of gas, which if inhaled would cause death.

One day, Alvin allowed one of the visiting village teachers to look through his telescope. He was looking at a boy about 150 yards away, but through the telescope this boy appeared to be only a few feet away. The teacher's exclamation was: "Ha! This thing is no good!" He thought that it was a work of "black magic" similar to that which forever haunted his life and that of his people.

Illness and death were the most troublesome concepts, and seldom were these attributed to natural causes. If someone became ill in the village, or if there was a death, then the medicine man had to be consulted and paid to ferret out the one who was responsible. Although the medicine man was sometimes portrayed as a useful person, it seemed to me that in most cases it was one witch ferreting out another one – or an innocent person who was elderly, and completely innocent. But someone had to be blamed. *In one recorded incident, a child died in the village and the medicine man was called. He strode with pomp and authority into the village, gazed into each face, and hurled his spear into the new grave where it stood upright with its shaft quivering. Calling out the name of the deceased child he shouted: "Rise up and fight the one who has killed you." Then he turned to the headman of the village and ordered him to bring a pot of porridge. The thick boiled corn meal mush was brought, and the medicine man ordered the people to stand in line. As each one came by, the medicine man put a spoonful of the porridge into his mouth. Then he announced: "One of you is a witch. The witch has eaten some of the porridge and will be killed by the spirit of the dead boy today!" The people looked at each other in fear and then hurried away to their huts. That afternoon an old woman died, and though she had been loved by all the people, they did not dare question the medicine man. However, Northern Rhodesia at that time was a British Protectorate and the British were not naive. When they learned of the incident, a doctor was sent to the village to investigate the death. It was discovered that the medicine man (witch doctor) had poisoned the old woman with a poison concealed in the porridge. He was sentenced to hang and an appeal was refused by His Majesty's High Court.

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* Adapted from an article by Eldred Echols in a mission periodical *Glimpses of Africa* June, 1948. The story is based upon actual facts. *Glimpses of Africa* published by W. N. Short, 1945-1955.

Witch doctors or medicine men were necessarily good psychologists, and were often attributed with cures in psychosomatic illnesses. Students became ill at school and nothing that we could do would help them. They assured us that in their case white man's medicine was ineffective, and that it would be necessary for them to return to the village to be treated by their own "village medicine." There were several of these illnesses which could not be explained by us, but the one which occurred most frequently was called "nzila," and was attributed to something similar to demon possession. The symptoms were various and varied: convulsions, coma, wild madness. Treatments administered by the students, too, were various. They were familiar with this illness and they felt confident that, while our medicines were effective in many illnesses, this one, at least, required treatment that only they could administer.

It was true that education dissipated their fears to some extent, and as children were born into Christian families, they were gradually released from some of the Satanic fears and practices which had such a terrifying hold on their ancestors. They learn that their God and His Son Jesus Christ are just the opposite of these forces, and so they learn to love and appreciate Him more and more. As the letter to the Hebrews tells us: "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death -- that is, the devil -- *and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death*" (Hebrews 2:14, 15).

In 1982, the museum at Livingstone, Zambia, exhibited a collection of articles, taken from a number of villages in the Southern Province of Zambia, which had actually been used in the practice of witchcraft, together with explanations of how the articles were used and the attending beliefs and practices. All of the exhibited articles were for the purpose of precipitating misfortune of every imaginable kind on one's enemies. The evil and foul-looking talismans and charms, the intended evil against others was chilling and awesome. Said my seven year-old grandson, Randy Mitchell, "I'm glad to get out of there!"

Pictured: Georgia Hobby, Anita, Brian, and Joanne Mitchell. A collection of a few of the "tools of the trade" in practicing witchcraft. Collected in 1975 by a villiage chief who was discouraging the practice.

White people can never understand the pressures placed upon African Christians. Since it is an animist society (where ancestors are worshipped) it is considered by the family absolutely essential that children be born into every home. What happens, then, if one of the partners in a marriage is barren? The wife is usually divorced and another wife sought who can bear children. Before it comes to this, however, there is strong pressure from the wife's family for her to seek help from the witch doctor, and this pressure may come from parents who claim to be Christians.

About a year after we arrived in Norther Rhodesia, Alvin and I were invited to the wedding of one of our teachers. The parents of the bride were Christians, so the wedding was modified according to the way that they felt Christians should celebrate such an occasion. Details of the ceremony have long since been forgotten, but one thing that I recall is that a small hand-wound record player furnished the music, and one of the records played was: "Carry Your Cross With A Smile."

As the years passed, no babies were born and the marriage was in trouble. The "Christian" parents thought that the girl should seek the help of African "traditional doctors." She refused. For ten years there were no children, but at last God answered their prayers by sending them several children. Their faith had stood the rigid test, and like Abraham of old, these examples of their lives were powerful influences.

*Then consider Mooka. Mooka found a place to live in the village of a Christian headman. But the people became jealous of his many cattle. They did not like him because he would not pray to the ancestral spirits, and they thought that he brought them bad luck. So they drove him out of the village and he was obliged to live alone on the open veld. Here he built a large house. The people were jealous of his house, so they planted gardens around it and when Mooka's cattle were obliged to cross over the gardens, the people demanded damages. Mooka moved to another site and built a small house, but again the people plowed gardens around his hut. They said: "This is a very selfish man. He does not make beer for his friends." Mooka was a leper, and a fellow leper who was headman of a village invited Mooka to live in his village. For a few years there was rest, but then there came a year of drouth. People everywhere were praying to the spirits for rain. The headman came to Mooka and said: "Make beer and pray to the spirits so that we can have rain."

"But I only pray to God."

"We shall all die of starvation. You must follow the ancient customs and help us to have rain."

"As a Christian, this I cannot do."

"Then get out of my village."

Mooka again moved and built a hut outside the village. A British magistrate saw the hut. "Whose hut is this?" he asked. "Does this person not know that it is illegal to live outside a village?" And he burned the hut to the ground. When he learned something of Mooka's problems with the villagers he replied: "It is as I expected. But these native Christians can't just break away from their people and their ancient ways."

But Mooka thought differently, and the Lord blessed him for his steadfastness. Many years later, Alvin and I visited him and his wife and family in a place where they had at last found peace. They had grown old, but from them had come some fine children and grandchildren. Mooka had a few aches and pains and asked for medicine from us. Alvin supplied him with a few attractively colored pills, mostly vitamins. Mooka still possessed his sense of humor: "I think I'll plant these and grow some," he said.

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* This story of Mooka taken from an article by J. D. Merritt in a mission periodical *Glimpses of Africa*, Nov.-Dec. 1945. A true account.

CHAPTER 9

ROUGHING IT IN THE ZAMBEZI VALLEY

Just as landing on the moon is a challenge to some men, and climbing a high mountain is a challenge to others, so the then uncharted Zambezi Valley called to the missionary men. It was a harrowing, exhausting trip of more than two weeks, much of it through elephant country, then over hills and boulders where elephants did not attempt to go. Alvin's bicycle had a small attached motor, but he pushed the bicycle more times than he rode it. When they started out, they were traveling with Orville Brittell's old truck, carrying supplies and most of the party. They soon found that it was necessary to make roads by moving boulders, making river banks less precipitous, and laying reeds and logs across boggy marshes. Once they had descended the escarpment and reached the banks of the Zambezi River, they had to find a way out, for there was no way that they could climb back the way they had come.

In the Valley, signs of elephants were everywhere, and they knew that these animals could not be very far away. They knew, too, that the elephants traveled on large, padded, silent feet, so that they could arrive unannounced. Around the campfire in the evening, the men discussed this possibility, and tried to decide upon a course of action should the elephants visit their camp during the night.

Firing a gun might cause the herd to stampede. Should they sleep under the truck? No. A vehicle is no obstacle for an elephant! Climb a tree? Elephants uproot large trees. Their final conclusion was that they should scatter in all directions -- the elephants would not be able to catch them all!

It was about this time that Alvin and J. C. Shewmaker, who had also brought along a small motorbike, decided to part company with the others and to try to find a quick solution to the problem of returning home. John Scott, an African who had been adopted as a child by the Scott family, decided to accompany them. John had a bicycle.

The remaining pages of this chapter are from Alvin's diary:

> "When we awoke this morning, all was quiet and peaceful, with the elephants many miles away. We arose at daylight because J. C. and I hoped to reach Kanchindu, about 30 miles away by noon, and perhaps on to Masuku Mission by night, as we had been told that Masuku was about thirty-five miles from Kanchindu. We had not gone far until we realized that these hopes were unrealistic. When we came to the dry river bed, the main path disappeared, and instead there were dozens of elephant paths in all directions. We followed the river-bottom country for a mile or two, then climbed into the bush. There were no paths, so we entered the forest. We heard a crashing sound to our left, but we did not investigate. Near noon, we came to an almost deserted

village where we stopped to brew tea before starting again toward Kanchindu. After sailing along easily on our motorbikes for two or three miles, we came to hills which were rough and steep. It was impossible to ride the bikes and almost impossible to carry them. Our water supply was rapidly dwindling, but near the top of the mountain, we found a spring with a tiny stream of water running out of the ground. We dared to drink some of it, unboiled, since we did not know where we would find more.

"Near the foot of the mountain, a sufficiently good path allowed us to ride the motorbikes again. Near sundown we came to some gardens where a group of women were sitting near a storehouse for grain. When they heard our hard-luck story, one of them offered us a dish of meal, which we gladly accepted. At the village, we found a camp site, and were able to buy a chicken and seven eggs. The headman asked his wife to bring us some water and a pot in which to cook the chicken. By using the little kettle which we had brought, I managed to boil enough water to fill the water bag, then waited for it to become cool enough to drink.

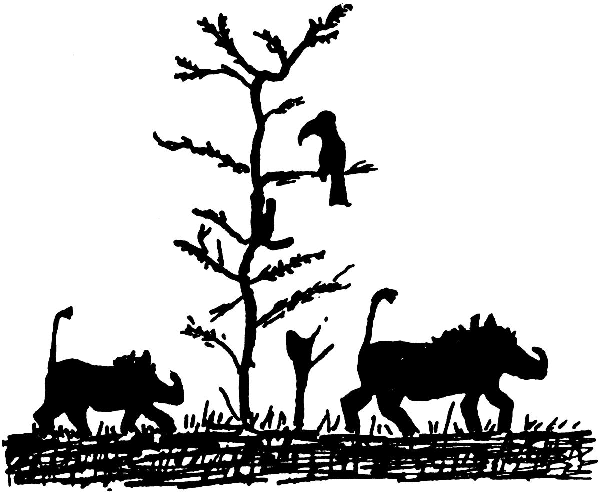
"Wood was scarce and grass was even more scarce, so the headman gave us a large bundle of grass to use for making our bed. It was wet and rotting on the inside, but we used what we could, spreading for each of us a small pile near the fire which we attempted to keep alive by the addition of a few sticks throughout the night.

"At this village, an important man had died some time before, and the ceremonies relating to his burial were just being completed. Several people had come from neighboring villages for the festivities, which included beer drinking, dancing and the blowing of whistles which had been fashioned from the horns of small animals. A hole had been cut in the top of the horn so that one might blow across the top of it to produce a sound as with a flute or fife. It seemed that each person had a whistle of a different pitch, and that no pains had been taken to tune these with one another. The din that resulted is easy to imagine. At times it reminded one of a flock of geese quarreling with one another. At other times, when the number of whistles had decreased, the result reminded us of someone trying to play a dilapidated accordion, with only three notes sounding, and two of these out of tune! At times the whistle-blowers would tire and sleep for awhile, but when they awoke, it would start all over again. Altogether, we may have slept about two hours during the night.

"The next morning, we asked the headman to find for us four men to help us carry our bikes across the next mountain, which we had been told was worse than the one which we had just crossed. We reached this mountain in about thirty minutes, and sure enough, it was covered with boulders from bottom to top. I think one could go all the way, stepping from one boulder to another, without touching the ground at all. Pushing the motorbikes was out of the question, so the men cut long poles and tied one to each of the motorbikes. Then, they lifted them to their shoulders and started the tortuous ascent. They pulled and struggled, stopped and started again, until the skin was rubbed off their shoulders. Finally the top was reached, to the relief of all. But the relief was only temporary!

"For several miles there were so many rocks that only occasionally could we ride our motorbikes for a hundred yards or so. Then we came to a gently sloping hillside, again literally covered with boulders, averaging about eighteen inches in diameter. There was a "path" through all of this for goats, perhaps, but not for pedestrians, pushing motorbikes. The men had turned back, so there was nothing to do but to roll the boulders away from the path until the motorbikes could be pushed through. It was beginning to get hot by this time; and without proper food and rest for twenty-four hours, the strain was beginning to tell on us. One thing that we left behind was a clearer path then the people had ever had before, and no doubt every time one walks along there, he will be reminded of two innocent white people who once went that way, pushing and carrying two astonishing motor vehicles, about as practical over terrain like this as two empty barrels!

"Around noon we came near a village and then to Kanchindu Mission, which was a welcome sight. No white missionaries had been stationed here for several years, but an African teacher and an African preacher were both stationed here and were supervised by the Methodist mission across the hills at Masuku. We thought we would have a good road from here on. We prepared tea, boiled eggs and cheese, and by 2:30 we were ready to leave for Masuku Mission, said to be thirty-five miles away. The teacher warned us that we could not make it, and gave us the names of some villages along the way where we might spend the night. Then he took us across the river in a huge, dug-out canoe, for which we were very grateful.



Wart Hogs

"It was not long before J. C. had some engine trouble. Later he had a puncture. The road was good, we made good time and about sundown we reached Siatwiinda's Village, thirteen miles from Kanchindu Mission.

"The people soon realized our plight, and proved themselves to be good Samaritans. They brought us three bowls of mush, already cooked, and two dishes of greens for relish. When we asked to buy a chicken, they gave us one. But another surprise, equally pleasant was yet to come. The headman had a village shop there, from which he brought a large canvas and all the new blankets we could ask for! Our camp was made in the center of the village, because the people said there were elephants in the country and that one had come into the village and pushed a house down, just a day or two before.

"After supper, the people were called together around our camp for preaching. J. C. and I both spoke for a short time, with John as an interpreter, then we visited with them for awhile before retiring.

"The next morning, we took leave of the people after filling our water bag. We then passed through wild country where elephant tracks had made the road rough in places.

"Around mid-morning, we came to a village where we bought peanuts. Some of the men of the village told us it was not far to Masuku Mission. We later learned that they had lied because they thought if we knew the truth we would want some of them to go with us to help push the motorbikes!

"Soon after leaving the village we came to a really high mountain. No doubt this was the one the people at Kanchindu had told us about, and which we thought we had passed already! Riding the motorbikes was again out of the question. All we could do was walk and push, stop and rest, then push again.

"By noon, we were only a little more than halfway up the mountain, and our water was nearly finished. We looked in vain for a spring of water. Our food supplies consisted of some peanuts and a little cheese, and we did not find these appetizing. We found some wild fruit, red finger-like incingas, and we were glad to get them. The small amount of water which remained, we divided among the three of us, not knowing when we would find more.

"The next few hours were the most trying of the entire journey -- the hottest part of the day and with no drinking water. The tangle of hills which lay ahead were tortuous, and getting our bikes across them was a never-to-be-forgotten ordeal.

"When we reached the top of the mountain, we had a lovely view back to the south, the way we had come. We could see the Zambezi River and the valley, and into the hills of Southern Rhodesia on the other side, perhaps sixty miles away.

"The remaining hills were not so high as the one we had just crossed, but they were just as steep. Sometimes we saw a peak in the distance and tried to decide which side the road would take. But eventually we would find ourselves on the very top of that peak. As Eldred Echols remarked later, 'the person who laid out this road must have been an ex-roller-coaster man!'

"Thus we pushed on for hours, so tired and weak that we found it necessary to stop and rest after we had gone fifty or sixty feet. At a dry stream bed we searched in vain for damp sand where we might dig for water. Mid-afternoon, J. C. had a puncture. We almost cried! We could have lain down on the ground, gone to sleep, and forgotten about the whole matter. But we knew we had to repair it. When the job was at last completed, I could not find enough saliva to cover the end of the small valve stem, to test it for leaks. J. C. stripped some bark from a little tree for us to chew, but the bark was bitter and contained little moisture. John had gone ahead, and about four o'clock he found damp sand in a small wet-weather stream, dug for water and found it! Not only did we drink our fill, but we filled our water bag before proceeding, up hill and down again. I think it was the hope that we might be able to see Masuku Mission at the top of the next hill that kept us going. Toward evening we gave up trying to reach the mission that day. We searched in the dark for enough wood to make two little fires, one at our heads and one at our feet, and to keep them burning all night. There was no fear of elephants. They had better sense than to come into this country. We left the elephants behind when we entered the mountains. But there might be a lion or a leopard, and the fires would keep them away, as well as keep us warm.

"Friday, the 18th of June, we arose early and were truly thankful to be able to stand. With the ever-present malaria in our systems, exhaustion and exposure might have brought an attack of fever. Before the sun came up we were on our way, without any breakfast of course, but feeling confident that we would soon arrive at the mission.

"For the first few miles it was down one hill and up another, just as it had been the day before. But then we began to see Masuku trees on the sides of the hills near the road! We knew that the mission might be near, since it was named for these wild fruit trees. A little farther on we met a man, the first we had seen since we got into the mountains. He assured us that we were near. Another mile or two the hills were almost finished and we could start riding our motorbikes. Then we met a group of men who told us that the mission was just ahead, and so it was!

"The Methodist missionaries at this mission were not slow to understand the situation, and to offer us food and rest. We had been without solid food for so long that we could only take liquids at first. From Mr. Foster we learned the truth about the distance we had come. From Kanchindu to Masuku was fifty-two miles, instead of thirty-five as we had been told. And the distance across those endless, tortuous hills was twenty-two miles! We had come about ten miles that day.

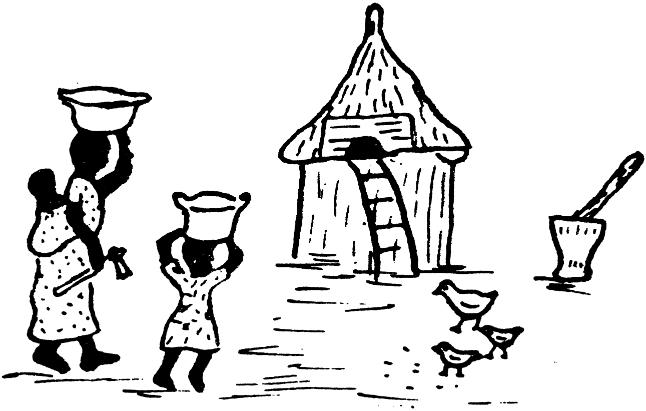
"After being refreshed by their hospitality, we started on to Choma, thirty-five miles away, to wait for a train to Kalomo -- home! The road was lovely -- no hills, no rocks, and we could ride, ride, ride!

"The train ride of forty miles from Choma to

Kalomo was also uneventful, and we reached Namwianga Mission after dark. About a week after we arrived, the remainder of the party came with the truck. They, too, were exhausted and we all agreed that the next trip into the "Zambezi Valley" should be by foot, by pack donkies, or by helicopter, but preferably by helicopter!

"We felt that our adventure had been fruitless and frustrating, and it had left all of us with a feeling of helplessness. We had preached about the Savior to the valley people, and some had accepted Him and been baptized. Christ had died for them just as He did for the rest of us. It was our sincere desire to help them. Yet questions came into our minds. Could such people really be converted by listening to one or two short sermons which sounded foreign and strange to everything that they had ever heard before? If one came forward and asked to be baptized, could we feel that he really understood what he was doing? And if some should become Christians in such a place as this with no one to give them further teaching and encouragement, what would become of them?"

NOTE: Today, there are good motor roads into the Zambezi Valley and missionaries make trips there for teaching God's Word to the people.



Drawn by an African Artist

CHAPTER 10

THE MARINE TIGER

World War II had been fought and peace had come at last. The British government had offered its subjects "sauce-pan radios" during the war -- inexpensive radios the size and shape of a medium-sized sauce-pan. From these we kept up with the current events, but they seemed remote from us and we were not greatly affected by them. All of this was soon to end. We had not been to visit our parents and relatives since we came to Africa in 1938, and so we decided that it was time to go. Anita, our only daughter, had been born in June, 1945, and we left for Cape Town in September of the same year, after being assured by Thomas Cook and Sons that they would try to find passage for our family to go to the States. Alvin built a tiny folding crib which fit around a basket bed. This could sit upon a train seat, allowing Anita to travel in comfort while my hands were busy with the other children.

In Cape Town, we were received by Mr. and Mrs. George M. Scott, the elderly American missionary couple who had lived at Namwianga Mission and had helped us to settle into our new home in 1938. They were hospitable and kind, but neither they nor we expected our stay with them to last more than a week. Now we felt the effects of the war! There were many other families also waiting in Cape Town who could not find passage because most of the passenger ships were being used for troop movements. And so the weeks dragged into months while we and our friends tried to cope with the difficult situation, expecting any day to be notified that we had passage on an incoming boat. Since the children had been somewhat isolated on the mission, they were now vulnerable to all the children's communicable diseases, and as each came down with whooping cough and chicken pox, there was the fear that we would find passage on a boat but would not be able to leave. We need not have worried. The children had plenty of time to have all the diseases and recover during our eight-month wait. In May, the U. S. Government sent a troop ship, the "Marine Tiger" to relieve the stranded American families.

As everyone knows, a troop ship is not the same as a luxury liner, but we were glad to be on our way at last that we would have gladly taken a raft. The women and children occupied officer's quarters, while the men were packed into the troop deck. Our ship anchored briefly at Trinidad and we had time to take a short trip around the island.

We remained in the States for more than a year, and during this time Kenneth, our last, and a welcome addition to our family, was born. We made a trip to California to recruit new missionaries, traveling by car with our young family. Tricycles were a necessity for the three oldest boys, and so at each stop they were assembled, and then disassembled so they could travel atop the car. There was washing to be done each night, but we had a wonderful trip, visiting the Petrified Forest and the meteorite crater in Arizona, the redwood forests and Yosemite in California. Back in Tennessee, we enjoyed the autumn scenery just before we departed again for Africa.

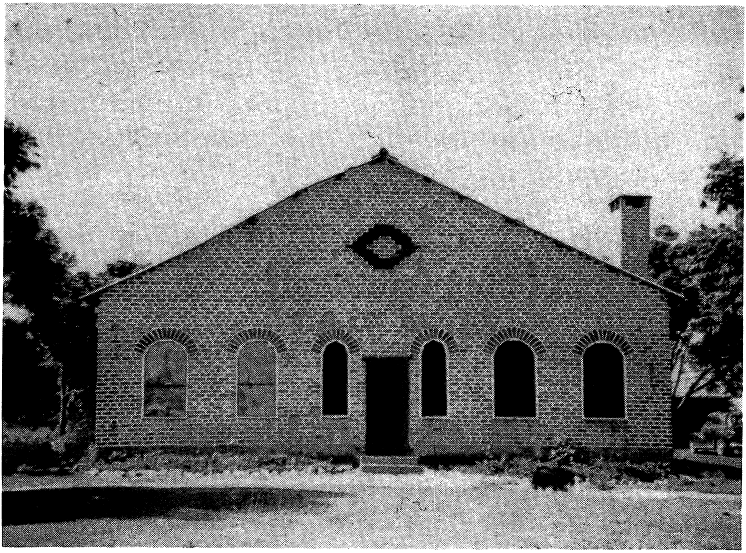
In October, Alvin drove our Chevrolet to New York so that it could, along with other freight, be placed on the Kenilworth Castle. Only twelve passengers were allowed to depart New York on this freighter, and those places were already taken, so our family traveled by train to Miami, Florida, and flew from there to San Juan, Puerto Rico, then to Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. We arrived in the warm country of Trinidad wearing winter clothing, only to learn that the airlines had lost our luggage -- no clothing for the children or diapers for the baby. We purchased necessary clothing and our luggage arrived a week later, just in time for us to board the Kenilworth Castle and sail once again for Cape Town.

Traveling in a confined space with small children poses many problems, and a child who is able to entertain himself is a blessing. Eight year-old David sat on the floor of the ship poking match sticks through a hole. Shortly, a steward appeared to inform us that the sticks were falling upon the heads of diners in the deck below.

CHAPTER 11

GROWING UP IN AFRICA

We were happy to be "going home" – our African home – in December, 1947. The little house which had been our first home ten years earlier was now occupied by others. Our family had outgrown it, and so a new dwelling was being constructed for us by A. B. Reese.



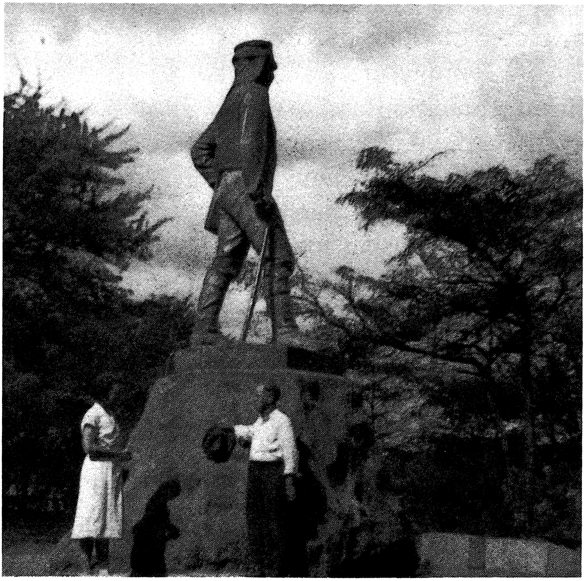
Our second home on the mission, built 1947-48

It was large and roomy and of such design that visitors often thought it was the church house. The entire thirty-foot width across the front was verahdah with screen wire in the openings. Later, we partitioned one end to make an additional bedroom. The other end housed Anita's cage of pet budgies and a mongoose with one leg almost

Thatching garage and guest room, located at the back of the main house.

amputated as a result of its having been caught in a trap. We completed the amputation, and the children were kept "hopping" to supply an insatible mongoose appetite with grasshoppers.

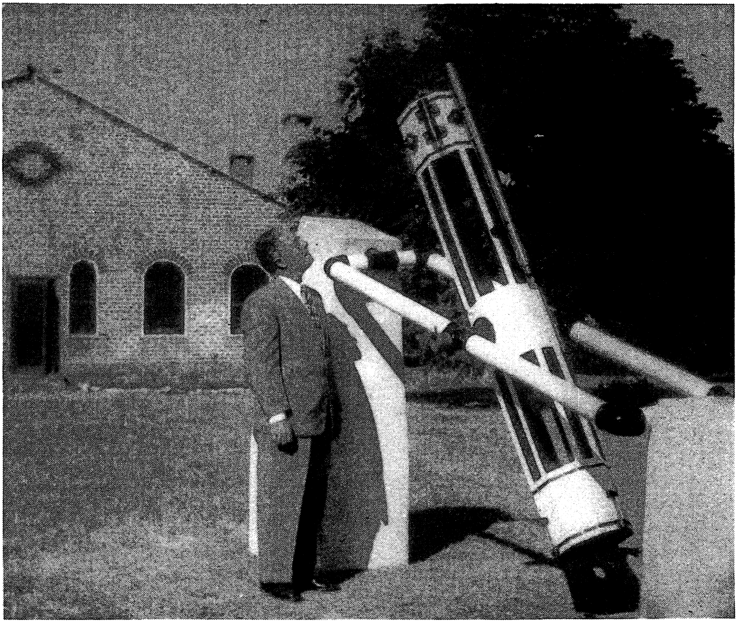
A wide "hall of fame" ran through the center of our house. In it hung the certificates and awards which the children received for athletic and other achievements during high school. Because of subterranian termites, our floors were constructed of concrete, and on rainy days the hallway became a skating rink.



Georgia and Alvin near David Livingston statue at Victoria Falls.

Alvin took up his work where he had left off, as principal of the African primary school, teacher training, visiting and inspecting village schools, preaching and encouraging village churches. Bible translation work, as a member of a committee, which was begun about 1940 continued, too, until the full Tonga Bible was published in 1963. As already mentioned, Alvin's main contribution to the effort was in proof-reading the entire manuscript before it went to the publishers.

Recreation for Alvin took the form of telescope-making. A friend in Canada had presented him with two ten-inch pieces of thick pyrex glass to be used for grinding the lens for a ten-inch reflecting telescope – a job requiring both infinite precision and patience, both of which qualities he possessed. And so into the tiny room of our house which was his "office" came a barrel weighted with sand, and it was on top of this barrel, over a period of four years, that Alvin ground, using increasingly finer grit as the job proceeded. A perfect lens for his telescope took shape by testing it somehow with a lighted candle, and then grinding again. When the grinding was at last completed, he rubbed the surface with a piece of soap – and scratched the surface of the perfect lens with a grain of sand! The scratch did not distort the image, however. It was the largest telescope in the whole country, and science groups came from other schools to view the moon, stars and planets.



Alvin and his 10-inch reflecting telescope. He constructed the telescope and the mounting, including the grinding, polishing, and silvering of the 10-inch mirror. The telescope easily magnified up to 500 or 600 times. Work on the mirror was begun in 1953 and the telescope was completed in 1958.

Gardening was both recreation and a practical necessity, and so when the rains arrived in late October or November each year, the oxen were harnessed and plowing began. We planted corn, beans, pumpkins, peanuts, okra, potatoes, tomatoes – crops which grew well in hot climates. When the crops matured, it was canning time and our pantry was filled with fruit and vegetables enough to last through the winter months, April through October, when no rain fell at all.

We enjoyed the kerosene refrigerator that we had brought from the U. S. A., but we continued to cook on a wood stove and to light our house with kerosene lamps.

December, 1950

We now had to consider the education of our own children. They could not attend the African schools because, in the lower grades, instruction was in the Tonga language.

The education department of Southern Rhodesia offered correspondence lessons, and for awhile we used these. They came to us in big brown envelopes, laid out with such precision that no originality was allowed. A high degree of parental participation was required in order to satisfy the strict demands of the "teacher" who checked the work in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia. Furthermore, competition between students, and association with other children, was practically eliminated.

Some of the progressive missionary parents who had children of school age, mainly the J. C. Shewmaker and W. N. Short families, decided to open a school to satisfy the need. Many of the families of white farmers in the area were experiencing the same needs, and so it was decided to open the school to neighboring children also. This necessitated that we have a boarding school.

I had been trained to teach home economics in high school, and the inadequacies which I felt in trying to teach young children were frustrating to me, and no doubt, to the children, too. My first classroom was so small that we could hardly turn around. But the school grew and was encouraged by the British government, with some financial aid so that we were able to build a classroom block and dormitories for both boys and girls. Eventually, the enrollment grew to fifty white children in all of the elementary grades. Mr. Shewmaker was principal of the school, known as "Eureka School," but unofficially often called the "white school" to distinguish it from the larger school for Africans. All teaching was done in English, but some of the children came from homes of South Africans, whose first language was Afrikaans. Usually English was spoken in these homes as a second language, and so the children were able to adjust. Not so with Connie Ras. Tall for his age and very shy, Connie did not understand a word of English. The house matron thought he was retarded and should be sent home, but he was in my beginners class at school and I felt that Connie deserved a chance, so we took him into our home to live. One of our sons, David, had learned in school a few words of Afrikaans, for which Connie was pathetically grateful. He was a bright child and learned English rapidly, and a gentle child, he was always a joy to have in our home. His parents, too, were grateful that we had given Connie a chance. They brought us plantana trees which grew exceptionally well at Namwianga, and to this day are flourishing and providing fruit for the families living there. The fruits appear to be small-sized bananas, but they are sweet, and with an apple flavor.

Correspondence courses in elementary education from a teacher-training college in the U. S. A. opened new interests for me and confidence which I sorely needed in teaching young children. Eventually I was granted an Elementary Teaching Certificate.

Before the school for white children was begun, some of the older missionary children who had African children exclusively for playmates, learned the Tonga language very well. They learned to enjoy African food, customs and games. But the later missionary children who attended white schools did not have this opportunity, and instead graduated from high school with a British accent to their speech.

Our children had the wide-open spaces in which to play. David had his butterfly collections. Paul was a hunter, and sometimes felled large game. George's love was frogs and snakes, which often snuggled away safely inside his shirt or pockets to peek out at some strategic moment in school or church.

David bottle-fed an orphan calf called "Nelson" after Britain's greatest admiral and naval hero. Nelson was imprinted on David and followed his bicycle wherever he went, as a dog would follow. This was amusing while Nelson was young, but the day when he caught me between his horns and a brick wall, I was not amused. Only a strong stick saved me.

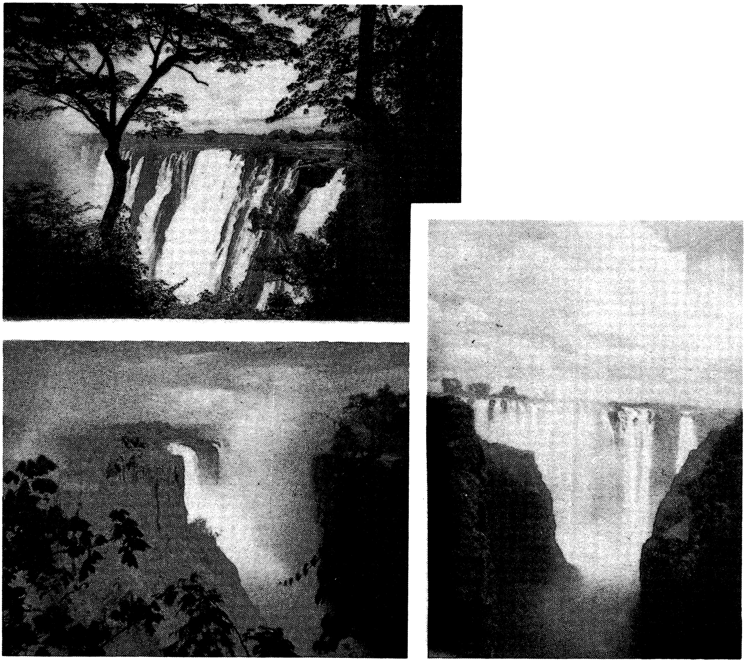
Life on the mission was not dull, and not always disadvantageous for the children. Yet I felt that they are the ones who made the greater sacrifices because of having to live away from home during high school and college. The day inevitably arrived when we could no longer educate the children on the mission and our only choice was to send them away to a British boarding school in the capital city, Lusaka, some three hundred miles north. In 1953, we outfitted David with the prescribed uniforms of Gilbert Rennie School, a government-operated boys' school. The uniform consisted of grey shirt and matching short pants, grey hat with maroon and white striped hat band, striped maroon necktie, grey and maroon knee-length socks and black shoes.

In all such schools, discipline was strict and unyielding. It was required that shoes be kept polished, neckties worn with the uniform. New students were "fags" of the older prefects – washing their socks and performing other menial tasks. Any absence from the school grounds had to be accounted for. From home, we sent roasted peanuts and home-baked cookies to supplement the montonous boarding school diet; but these goodies, called "tuck" were also strictly regulated by locking them in the "tuck room" and allowing access to them only at set times. Some of the girls hid tuck in their closets under the then-popular stand-out petticoats.

How could the kids stand it? None of us had any choice. Their school friends from grammar school were in the same boat.

In Lusaka, Christian families often took our children to their homes for weekends or short holidays. Mr. and Mrs. Frank Murphy from England were Christians who worked in Lusaka, he as nurse-tutor and she as an English teacher. They took upon themselves the oversight of the missionary children, purchasing equipment to make them comfortable for weekend visits. The children loved the Murphys and the visits to their home, and their lives were influenced for good by these Christian people.

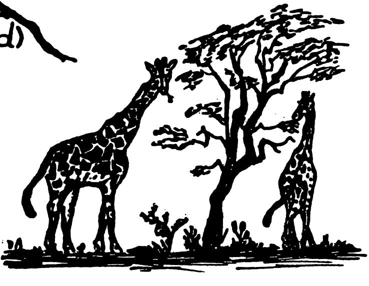
The children were allowed three visits home per year, and at vacation time we planned treats that the family could enjoy together. One favorite was a trip to Livingstone, ninety miles to the south, where we rented small, round, grass-thatched huts on the banks of the Zambezi River. For several days before the excursion, I baked bread, cookies, and sausage rolls. When the big day arrived, we would leave early, and eat breakfast in the car on the way, with Alvin driving and me handing out sandwiches from the rear seat. In Livingstone, there were car repairs, trips to the dentist and doctor, and shopping from the list that we had been working on for weeks. Then seven miles farther on to the huts which we had reserved. The mighty Zambezi River rolled not far from our front door, and as a backdrop, the roar and spray from the world-famous Victoria Falls.



Victoria Falls

It was an exhilarating scene of which we never tired. Sometimes we took a launch trip along the river. The operator of the launch knew where to locate the hippo pools and the crocodiles sunning on logs. At the end of the run, we stopped on a small island and someone collected wood to make a fire to heat water for brewing tea. During teatime, monkeys who had become accustomed to this routine, snatched at our cake. At night, hippos came out of the river to graze along the banks of the river not far from our huts.

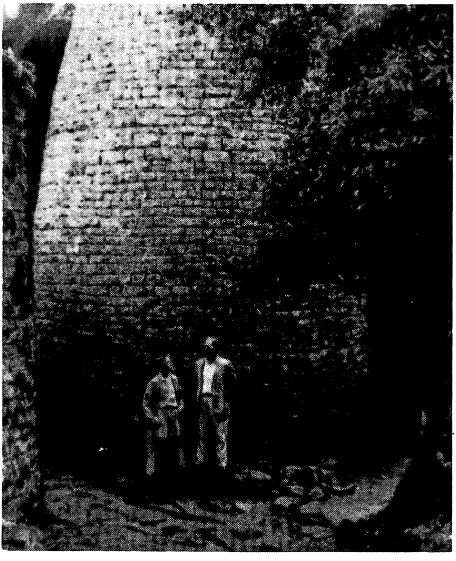
"The Sentinel"
(Atop a termite mound)



Giraffe in Livingstone Game Park

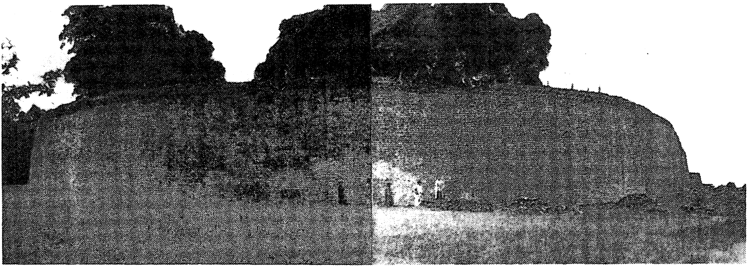
On rarer occasions we crossed the Zambezi River into Southern Rhodesia (now the country of Zimbabwe) and explored some of the attractions there. One was "Zimbabwe Ruins," the best known of the two hundred ruins found in Southern Rhodesia. Zimbabwe Ruins consist of a strongly built "Acropolis" with walls thirty feet high in places, and sixteen feet thick. Its location on a hill top suggests a defensive function, but inside is a sacred enclosure, suggesting a religious function.

Below the Acropolis is an elliptical wall which measures eight hundred feet around and up to thirty-two feet high. There is also a large tower.



The Riddle of the Ruins

These structures are made of huge granite slabs, with some of the courses around the top set together at an angle for decorative effects, but the remainder of the slabs were fitted together in regular courses without the use of mortar. Ruins of gold-working utensils have been found here, causing some geologists to speculate that these are the remains of King Solomon's mines. This speculation caused a gold rush in the 1880's, with some farmers deserting their farms and rushing to the site in hopes of finding some of King Solomon's gold.



The elliptical wall around Zimbabwe Ruins which measures eight hundred feet around and thirty-two feet high.

Others speculate that the Phoenicians built Zimbabwe, but the most recent investigations by archeologists tell us that Zimbabwe was the capital of two Southern Africa empires in the 1400's.

We had been in Africa for twenty years, but we had not yet seen an elephant in the wild, though we had once visited Wankie Game Reserve in Southern Rhodesia where at some times of the year there are many elephants. We decided to try again, and armed with our "starflash" and Brownie box cameras, we cruised leisurely along the park roads, eyes peeled for any game that might be visible among the trees or at a turn in the road. Large, grey granite boulders were numerous, too. Someone pointed out a boulder, shaped like an elephant. To our astonishment, it **was** an elephant! In our amazement our cameras were forgotten momentarily, then Alvin picked up the small starflash camera with its tiny view-finder. While he was trying to get the elephant in focus in its sights, the wild beast decided to charge us. We shouted for Alvin to **GO**, and as he delayed in an effort to snap his picture, we became frantic. At last he flung the camera down and stepped on the gas. The roar of the engine momentarily slowed the elephant, and we were able to proceed in front of him. We rounded a curve, the elephant took a shortcut, all the time charging toward us. When at last we were safe, we took inventory. George, sitting in the back seat, had snapped a picture of the charging elephant with his little Brownie box camera. Alvin regretted that he had not seen the elephant charge, but we assured him that the beast had come within twenty feet of us. Anita, badly shaken, declared that she would remain on the river and eat raw fish the rest of her life before she would travel that road again. The elephant was a rogue with one broken tusk. He was en route to the river for a drink and we enraged him by crossing his path. He later became so dangerous that it was necessary for the game wardens to destroy him.

Coming for us! July 11, 1960. Snapshot by George Hobby.

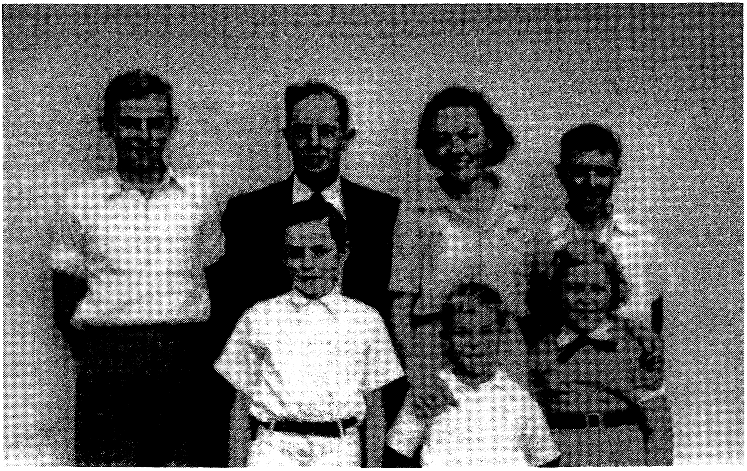
Many years after this fright, Kenneth took an individual adult intelligence test. On one sub-test there were four puzzles. He scored high on three of them, but failed the fourth, where he was required to assemble the parts of an elephant. The examiner was puzzled since this was considered the simplest of the four, and questioned Kenneth about his experience with elephants. She was enlightened by his explanation that the only elephant he had ever seen tried to destroy our family!

African elephants are unpredictable and have been known to kill tourists who were trying to snap a photograph of them. The son of one of our white neighbors, a young man of eighteen or nineteen years, was hunting elephants with his uncle. They wounded one, and the elephant turned on the boy, throwing him to the ground and killing him. Then he proceeded to remove the young man's clothing, even his socks, cover his body with branches from the trees, and then to stand guard over the body for two days, while the family waited.

We were living in a British colony, our children attended British boarding schools, and our mission school work was supervised regularly by men and women from England. These were honorable, likeable people, and so we grew to admire the British people and to respect their customs, language and philosophies. We felt that they were interested in the welfare of their subjects and administered them with fairness and generosity. From the days when David Livingstone fought for the abolition of slave trade, the Africans had come a long way. One reason for this was that the British discouraged wars between tribes. The Queen's picture was seen in schools and other public places and the royal family was frequently in the news, so we came to accept them and to follow their activities with interest. Alvin and I were once invited to a tea in the capital, Lusaka, honoring the Queen Mother and Princess Margaret. We later had a closer view of them when our family attended the Rhodes Centenary Exhibition in Bulawayo, Southern

Rhodesia, in July, 1953.

On the mission there was a big, flat granite rock a mile or so from our house where we went for family picnics. The Africans thought that no one in his right mind, who had a comfortable house with tables and chairs, would go to eat on a rock! So it must be ancestor worship. The fact that we sometimes built a fire further confirmed their suspicions.



And so as our children grew up, one by one they were sent away to high school, returning at holiday times on the "school train," enduring the rigors of a British boarding school, until one day in 1957 David was ready for college. He had been a small boy of eight or nine years when he last left the States, and leaving the only family he knew to go to an unknown world required considerable fortitude. Even his grandparents and uncles and aunts were strangers to him. The Leonard Gray family who was making the trip agreed for him to travel with them, but the departure was difficult for our family, too, since we had no idea when we would see him again. Most of his college expenses must come from his work, and so he went to work on a farm during the summer before school opened. Other summers were spent at a canning factory in De Kalb, Illinois.

In December, 1958, following my father's death, my mother came to visit us. She had intended to stay for a year, but the country did not appeal to her, and she became increasingly homesick as the weeks passed. She returned to the States after six months.

Soon afterwards, our second son, Paul, completed his high school work and the John Hardin family generously agreed that he might accompany them to the States via Europe. After two years when it came George's turn to go, he was not so fortunate. He traveled alone on a freight boat, the James McKay. The long trip into the unknown and frightening future was traumatic for a boy of seventeen. Little did he suspect that one day, as a medical doctor, he would return with a lovely wife and two sons, Christopher and Jonathan, to visit this land again.

CHAPTER 12

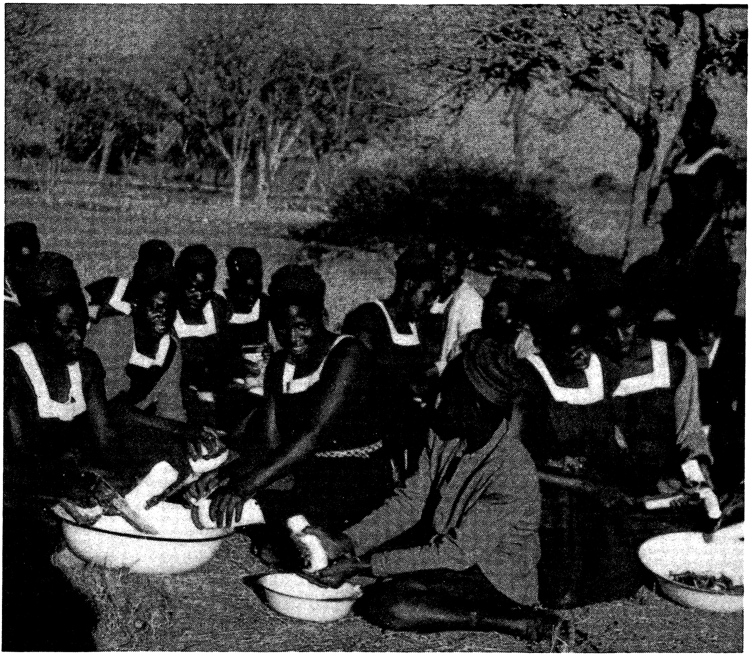
THE WINDS OF CHANGE

New Trends in Education

African girls' schools had come a long way since Mrs. Rowe began teaching a few girls in strict isolation from the boys, some twenty years before. The girls now attended classes with the boys except for homecraft classes. For these classes, we had a new building with modern tables and chairs, a wood cook stove and charcoal irons.

Georgia teaching a homecraft class

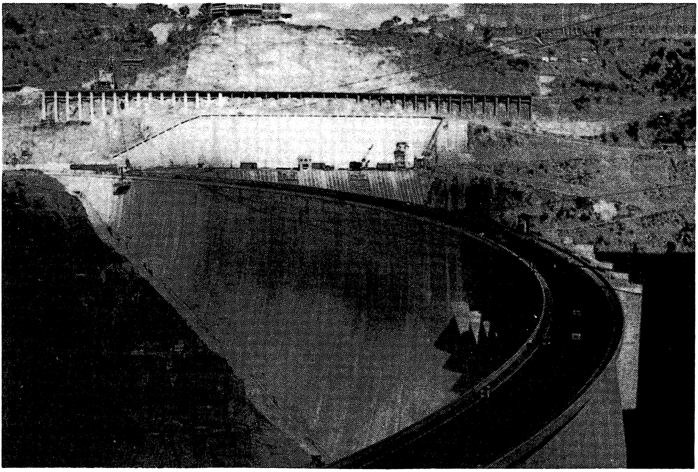
I returned to that school, and with the help of one African teacher, taught all of the homemaking subjects, including child care, making starch from cassava roots for starching clothes, and baking biscuits (scones) in an iron pot with hot coals beneath and above. The girls learned to bathe and feed babies, to make their own dresses and to knit and embroider.

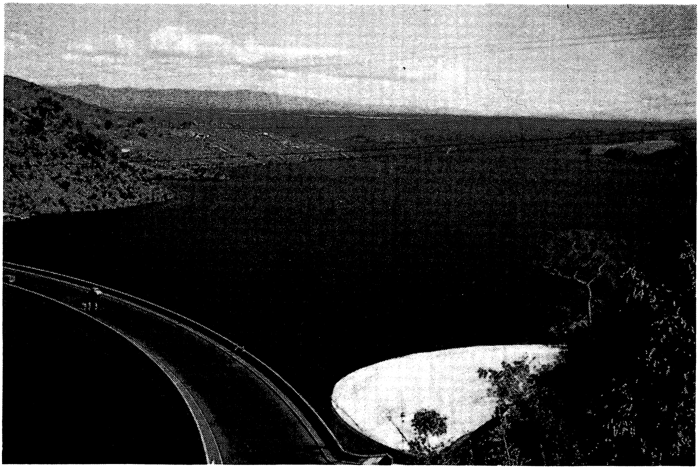


School girls using cassava roots to prepare starch

Advances in Technology

The building of the great Kariba Dam, largest hydroelectric project in Africa, and 175 mile long Kariba Lake on the Zambezi River not far from us, were tangible evidences of change. Had we known what sort of country we would have to pass through to visit the new dam, we probably would never have started out to see it – a structure that would have been remarkable if it had been built in an industrial center – 420 feet high with a length along its crest of 1,900 feet; 80 feet thick at its base, and containing 1,400,000 cubic yards of concrete. But here it was, in one of the wildest and least accessible parts of Central Africa, where there were no roads, no power and not even any villages. If our car had broken down on the trip, we would have been in trouble indeed. But we traveled over the rough roads, through wild elephant country, without incident and saw the dam, which was not yet completely filled. Today, good roads have been built to this site.





Two views of Kariba Dam and Kariba Lake, June, 1960.

Political Change

To try to stem the tide of the "winds of change" as Sir Roy Welenski, the Prime Minister, described it, a Federation was formed between Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. It was hoped by the white people that this Fedration would delay Northern Rhodesia's desire for an early independence. But it only served to aggravate the politically minded Africans who understood the ploy of the whites, and the Federation was dissolved after ten years. But the damage had been done and there was considerable anti-white feeling among the political activists. It was feared that violence might erupt in Lusaka, the capital city, where some of our children attended the government school. At nights, some of the senior boys were given patrol duty around the dormitories of white children. Excitement ran high and rumors spread among the students. In the middle of one night, some of the senior girls played a prank on the younger girls in the dormitory by having them move in complete silence from their warm beds to a building some distance away.

But serious preparations were made by the government for protection of the white population should the need arise. We were to bring whatever weapons we might have and assemble at the hotel in town.

We Are Caught Up in the Winds of Change

Alvin had been principal of the elementary school at Namwianga for about twenty-four years. For about half of that time, he had trained teachers. Two things were becoming increasingly apparent: 1) That Northern Rhodesia, a British protectorate, was headed for independence and a Zambian president very soon. 2) That the teachers who had been trained by Alvin and who had continued with higher teacher training were now capable of taking over the principalship of the elementary school.

The chief reason for our delay of fifteen years in visiting the States was the children's education. The British system of secondary education under which the children had studied, was so vastly different from that of the American system that we feared that a furlough of a few months would be too disruptive. And so we remained in Northern Rhodesia, and sent each son to the States to college after he had taken his Cambridge Exam. David, Paul and George were all in the States in college at this time, and it was our daughter's year for graduation. Kenneth still lacked two years of high school.

We gave much thought and prayer as to what our next move would be. One day about 1960 or 1961, we had gone to the town of Livingstone and were waiting our turn at the Livingstone Hospital. Some stranger made a remark to the nurse there about how much patience she had. Her reply was that she had been a school teacher, but that she did not have enough patience for that job and so she had taken training to be a nurse.

On our eighty-five mile return journey home, I thought about her words. Nursing! I thought it would be wonderful to be a nurse! Alvin like the idea, too, and so we began making inquiries to try to learn if it were possible for people of our ages to study nursing.

Our inquiries over the following months revealed that there were three ways that we might become registered nurses. A two-year program called the "Associate Degree Nursing Program" was in its infancy and just beginning to be accepted. It required two full years of concentrated study, at the end of which a student with a passing grade might take the State Board Examination to become a Registered Nurse. Alvin was advised to undertake this program of study.

We completed the many necessary preparations for an extended stay in the States – our first visit there for fifteen years. Kenneth, now sixteen, and Anita, almost eighteen, had no recollection of ever having been in the States. Our route took us via Madeira Island and England where we visited our friends, the Frank Murphys, then from Southampton to New York on perhaps the final voyage of the Queen Mary, the same ship on which we had traveled to England in 1938.

Taking the step into nursing was a bold adventure for us, and one that we would never have had the audacity to undertake had we not felt that the Lord was directing us in that direction. We had four children in college, and our financial resources were almost exhausted. I had to have a job, and soon. Finally, in July, I signed a contract to teach sixth grade in Central Elementary School, Texarkana, Arkansas, where we rented a small house. David, George and Anita had summer jobs. Kenneth, too, mowed lawns while he lived at home. Paul, who stammered, had gone to a speech camp in North Port, Michigan. Paul had done well during his three years in Harding College, especially in math, and had decided to become an engineer and to transfer to the University of Arkansas for his senior year in college. He was engaged to be married early in September and his wife, too, would attend the university for her final year. The engagement had been announced, and Carol had made her wedding dress.

Paul had many friends because he himself was friendly. At the camp, he had been selected "sports captain." Although he was feeling ill, he felt that he couldn't give up until the sports events were over. Then he reported to the infirmry. When they phoned to tell us that he was ill, they didn't know what the problem was, but the report which they gave sounded as if he were very ill. I was afraid he might have the dreaded "black water fever," which is a vicious form of malaria sometimes found in Africa, and often fatal. Paul had bought a used car from one of his friends, and I knew that he would be unable to drive it home, since camp was nearly over. I decided to go to see him and drive the car home for him.

David's and Karen Hershey's wedding in Dallas was scheduled for August 10th. I had looked forward to this event, and had my dress ready, but I felt that I should go to Paul. I took a train from Texarkana to Chicago, and then a plane from Chicago to North Port. Some of the camp staff met me there. They had not advised me to come, but were relieved that I was there, since Paul was very ill. I visited with him and discussed our plans for returning home and for the wedding. I asked if I should call for Carol to come, but the doctor did not think that Paul's illness was that serious. That night, I slept well and accepted an invitation to dinner with the camp directors. I visited Paul in the morning and felt hopeful that he would recover. Even when the nurse took off Paul's watch, handed it to me and advised me to hold Paul's hand, I was completely unaware of the significance of these actions. A friend asked me to step out to the cafeteria for lunch while she stayed with Paul, and when I returned, he was dead. It was David's wedding day, August 10, when he was to be married at eight o'clock in the evening. Not wishing to disrupt the wedding, I refrained from sending a telegram to the family until the next day. Paul was buried near his grandparents in Searcy, Arkansas.

The Weaver

My life is but a weaving
Between my Lord and me . . .
I may not choose the colors;
He knows what they should be.

For He can view the pattern
Upon the upper side,
While I can see it only
On this, the under side.

Sometimes He weaveth sorrow,
Which seemeth strange to me;
But I will trust His judgment
And work on faithfully.

'Tis He who fills the shuttle;
He knows just what is best;
So I shall weave in earnest
And leave with Him the rest.

Not till the loom is silent
And the shuttles cease to fly,
Shall God unroll the canvas,
And explain the reason why.

The dark threads are as needful,
In the weaver's skillful hand,
As the threads of gold and silver
In the pattern He has planned.

(Author unknown)

This was my first brush with death at close range, and I struggled to understand. I dreamed that I was in a dark forest, trying to find my way home before night. I wished for a telephone so that I could call the family to tell them that I would be late arriving. Then suddenly I walked into a room where there was light and warmth. I was home! Somehow this dream explained to me that this is what death is like, and it was a great comfort to me.

The Vietnam war was on, and soon after Paul died, a notice came for him to appear for a physical. I ignored it, and then another and much stronger letter came, demanding to know why he had not appeared. I replied to that one, and took comfort from the fact that Paul did not have to go to Vietnam.

All members of our family were in school that fall -- Kenneth in Texarkana High School, George and Anita at Harding College, David with Karen at Harding Graduate School in Memphis, Alvin in Texarkana Junior College, and I was teaching sixth grade at Central School in Texarkana, Arkansas.

Alvin was the only man in his nursing class because people were just beginning to acknowledge that male nurses were necessary. He was also twenty years or so older than any of his classmates. Alvin studied hard and did well. Before he graduated, he became a member of the Zeta Sigma Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, was elected "Mr. Nursing Education" by his classmates, and was one of three students in the entire college to receive straight "A's" during one year.

Alvin and I had agreed that after he had finished his nurses training, he would get a job nursing so that I could take nurses training. And so after he graduated and passed State Board Exams, we moved to Fayetteville, Arkansas, so that I could take some pre-nursing courses at the university. Since I already had a degree in Home Economics, with general and organic chemistry, these courses would not have to be repeated, and I could obtain a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing in three years.

Alvin was more than faithful to his end of the bargain. After a year in Fayetteville, we moved to Little Rock, Arkansas, where I entered nursing school. Kenneth had graduated from high school in Fayetteville and was now in Harding College. David had graduated from Harding Graduate School in 1965 with two Master's Degrees, and they had presented us with our first grandchild, Kimberley Kay. Anita had completed pre-nursing courses at Harding College and had come to live with us in Little Rock in order to attend the School of Nursing. And so there were four of our family now at the University Medical Center -- Anita and I in the School of Nursing, Alvin working as a staff nurse on the floor of University Hospital, and George, who was attending medical school. George had just married Priscilla Baker and they lived about a mile away.

After two years, Anita and I graduated from the Nursing School. We had both worked hard and had done well. Anita was tired of school and wished to work in the hospital, so she began pediatric nursing, and moved into an apartment in the same house with George and Priscilla. After attending the wedding of Kenneth and Ann Adair in Grove, Oklahoma, Alvin and I moved to Denver where I entered graduate school of nursing. I graduated with a Master of Science in Nursing in the summer of 1968, and was qualified to teach in a School of Nursing, but Alvin was longing for his African home and the mission field. We had been away for almost seven years. After much thought and prayer, I saw that my place in life was to be Alvin's helper, and I consented to return with him to Zambia.

Anita, Alvin and Georgia Hobby, 1967, at University Hospital, Little Rock, Arkansas

We departed on a freight ship, the James McKay, from Beaumont, Texas in early October, the same ship that George had traveled on to the States in 1961. George and Priscilla, Kenneth and Anita came to see us off. It was difficult to leave our children, not knowing when we would see them again, but we felt that they did not need us. The three boys had all married fine, intelligent girls and had happy, stable marriages. The Lord had blessed us greatly, and I felt that I wanted to do what I could to show my appreciation to Him.

From Beaumont, Texas, we sailed directly for Cape Town, arriving November 8, 1968, almost exactly thirty years since our first landing there, and were met by Thomas Hartle, the same one who had met our ship thirty years previously. After a week, we took the train for Zambia (Northern Rhodesia before independence), passing the Great Karroo and the desert country beyond the Hex River Mountains of the Cape. In some of these areas, some of the poorest people of Africa live, but I saw one little girl who seemed to be dancing from sheer joy of living, right in the midst of all the poverty.

When we left Africa in 1962, the country in which we lived was called "Northern Rhodesia," and it was a British protectorate. It had gained independence in 1964, and was now called "Zambia," with Kenneth Kaunda as president. We had been away for nearly seven years, and we didn't know what changes to expect or how we could expect to be received by the Zambian people. We were pleasantly surprised. The customs officials were polite, and our old friends and acquaintances among the African people seemed delighted to have us return. New government schools had been built while we were away, and roads and parks were well-kept. There was now an African principal at the primary school where Alvin had been principal for more than twenty years.

During our absence, however, a new Christian high school was perceived as a necessity if our work and influence was to continue in that area. Some of the older missionaries, J. D. Merritt and J. C. Shewmaker, enlisted the help of George S. Benson to construct and staff the school.

By the time we arrived, construction of the school was well under way with classrooms, dormitory buildings and a new dwelling for the principal completed. It was located on the same mission, Namwianga, where we had formerly lived, but about a mile from the site of the primary school.

For a few months we shared an apartment with Roy Merritt while Keith Besson supervised the building of a new house which we were to occupy, and a small medical clinic nearby.

The new secondary school for African students needed us, and we joyfully submerged ourselves in the work that was required. By this time, we were the oldest and most experienced of the staff, and the younger workers seemed happy to have our help with their many problems. Next door to us lived John Kledzik, principal of the school, and his lovely wife, Mary – both of whom we came to love dearly. Mark Kledzik was born shortly after our arrival at Namwianga and Kathy two years later, and so we became "grandparents" to them.

I loved the shapes of the trees and the clouds, the brilliant African sunsets, the colored leaves of spring, the rollers and caramine bee-eaters, the dry, cool winter days. Although I had reluctantly returned to Africa, I was happy to be back.

Our main work in the school was teaching, but part of our work was operating the clinic at regular hours. In order to prepare ourselves better for this, we spent a week at Kabanga Mission, some fifty miles away, observing the work that the Zambians were doing in the out-patient clinic. We had purchased some equipment and medicines before we left the States, and we were able to obtain other medications in Lusaka. We also applied for, and obtained, nurse registration in Zambia. In addition to teaching and medical work, Alvin served as bookkeeper and treasurer for the school.

Most of our weekends were spent preaching in some village, and this we enjoyed, too. It was certainly a change from the work we did all week, but it made for a very full schedule.

CHAPTER 13

AFRICAN WAYS AND WISDOM

Nursing in Africa

Nursing in Africa deviated considerably from our professional training, but we were constantly using our training to make judgments, and with God's help we did not endanger anyone by the decisions which we made. Our patients were not only the high school students, but students from the primary school, teachers and their families, farm laborers from the mission and from nearby farms and villages, and the missionaries and their families.

Alvin at Namwianga Clinic – 1970

We had clinic hours which students adhered to, but there were emergencies and we were often awakened at nights by frightened or genuinely ill people. We saw perhaps fifty people daily.

A woman cook from the primary school came with a very high temperature and was treated for malaria. We asked her to return the following day for further medication, but we did not see her again for several days. When we asked her why she did not return, she explained: "I had to work."

Malaria, which was the most frequent complaint, was a satisfying malady to treat because the medication produced such rapid results. But there were accidents, too – a needle embedded in the hand, a stick in the foot, an insect in the ear. There was a small hospital in Kalomo, just three miles away, and another in Zimba, thirty miles away. These were usually staffed with nurses and medical orderlies. Serious cases we took in our car to Livingstone, eighty-five miles away, where there was a qualified medical doctor.

Alvin saved the life of a village man by diagnosing correctly strangulated hernia and arranging for him to be treated at Livingstone Hospital. A young baby came with tetanus, caused by severing the cord with a dirty razor blade. He could not be saved.

Mid-afternoon, two girls and an older woman came to tell me that Falida, a student, was very sick. I found her to be five months pregnant. I was called again in the evening and delivered a dead fetus.

Alvin recognized the seriousness of Kenneth Syampungani's illness and rushed him to Livingstone Hospital where he died that night of sub-arachnoid hemorrhage. For a time following Kenneth's death, frightened students required treatment at all hours. They had similar symptoms as Kenneth's, but without foundation. One delegation of five girls awakened me at 3:15 A. M. telling me that Spatiswe was crying and they were frightened for her, and with her. But it was not serious.

Psychosomatic illnesses were common, and more so around time for exams. These students required special treatment, and often the student felt that it was necessary for him to go to his village to be treated with "traditional medicine" (the "medicine man"). White man's medicine was not effective against his particular illness.

At one time the students were served lemonade and a few hours later there were a hundred students in our yard with tummy-ache, crying and vomiting. Some of the lemonade had been mixed in galvanized buckets, so how much of it was actual discomfort and how much was mass hysteria we shall never know. We passed out bisodol and bicarb and soon all was well.

We kept anti-venine in the clinic for use against snake bite, but it was not often required. A few Africans and one missionary were treated, but we have been told that some poisonous snakes have two types of bites -- one harmless and the other a "business bite." We suspect that the missionary did not receive a "business bite."

"Higher" Education

To find a place in school is happiness to every African seven-year old. To be unable to go to school is misery beyond description. And not every child was able to go. With the rapidly expanding population, trained teachers, school houses and other facilities were unable to keep pace with the demand. Then there was the problem of "school fees," books and school uniforms. Some families were unable to meet the cost. Thus, when a child has the good fortune to find a place in a school, and when his family makes considerable sacrifice to supply him with the money required, even as a young child he feels burdened with a responsibility to do well in school in succeeding years. He longs for the time, years ahead, when he can hold a good job and repay his family for the sacrifices they have made for him. When we understand these things about a student, it helps us explain ever-present cheating on exams. Having practiced cheating throughout primary and grammar school, he has developed it to a fine art by the time he reaches high school. But there is a government exam at the end of the seventh grade which eliminates two-thirds of the school goers, another at the end of tenth grade which eliminates half of these, and so those who finally make it to the last two years of high school are truly privileged and they are quite aware of the fact. This is not to say that all who make it to the top are intellectuals, for politics, bribes, stolen exams and other corruption often determine the selection and placing of students.

The need to do well on exams also helps to explain the prevalence of psychosomatic illness at exam time.

African Hospitality

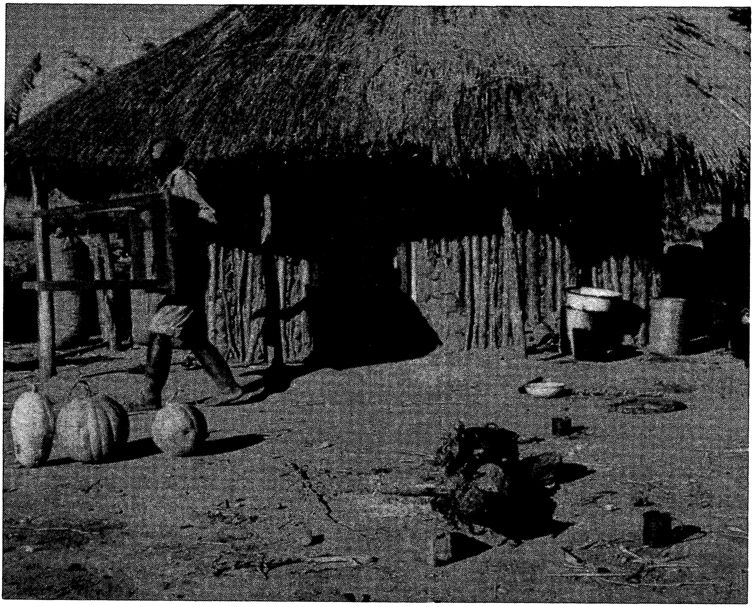
Hospitality was always there and you could count on it – you would receive the best. This was their tradition, but it emerged in different forms, and was always a delightful surprise.

When we visited Simundivwi Government School where Petros Siazyombo, a former student at Namwianga was the teacher, his wife brought us supper of insima and curried chicken, and rice with curried chicken for breakfast.

At Sindowe Village, upon our arrival, the best chairs were brought out, followed by a small table covered with an embroidered cloth. Large mugs of maheyo, the African traditional drink, were served. In the evening, five different women brought us insima and relish!

On another occasion, near Sindowe Village, we were served boiled sweet potatoes and pumpkin in the evening, as we and the village children listened enthralled by old Joni's story of his encounter with a leopard. Sweet potatoes were brought for breakfast, and before leaving, we received gifts of milk, chickens and peanuts.

Since kindness and hospitality to visitors and strangers is a part of their tradition and practice, it is difficult to reconcile such consideration of others with another of their traditions which seems just the opposite.



Mafuta bringing a table from his house for the use of his guests. Mafuta's legs are enlarged due to a disease called "elephantiasis."

When a man dies, leaving a widow and children, it is customary for the man's relatives to confiscate for their own use all of his possessions, even to blankets and cooking utensils, leaving the widow and children destitute. Because this custom is so prevalent, some couples have begun to open savings accounts for the wife which could not be decimated by the relatives in event of the husband's death.

A Surprise

When we left the U. S. A., we did not expect that any of our children would join us in Africa. But we had scarcely been in Zambia five months when we received a letter from Anita saying that she had been saving her money and she now wished to visit her childhood home! A visa had to be obtained for her to visit us, so we went to Lusaka, the capital city, to see the Immigration Officer. We explained to him that Anita could come on a visitor's visa, but that if they would grant her a work permit instead, she would be able to help with the clinic work since she was a Registered Nurse. We were told to return to their office at 2:00 P. M., and to our great relief they had an Employment Permit ready for her. They had sent a cablegram to the Zambian Embassy in Washington, instructing them to grant Anita a visa.

When Anita left the States, the weight of her luggage was not questioned, but at London she was told that excess weight would cost her around one hundred dollars. If she did not pay, she would have to leave one case in London. She was traveling alone and did not have the money to pay it. As she sat pondering her predicament, near to tears, a lady spoke to her. She was sending her young grandson back to his parents in Zambia and he would be traveling with very little luggage, on the same plane as Anita. It was arranged that Anita could put her excess luggage on the boy's luggage allowance, and in return Anita would be a traveling companion for the child!

It was an indescribable thrill to see Anita's plane come in and to see her among the passengers. It was April, 1969.

There were other young people among the teachers at the high school, some of whom she had known since childhood, and so within a short time Anita became nurse, librarian and high school teacher.

We didn't know how long she would stay, and we didn't ask. It was our hope that she would find the work rewarding enough to remain for several months. Soon it became apparent that there were other attractions. The high school students observed this, too, and sang "Ba-Dennis and Ba-Anita" for the remainder of the school year. (Note: "Ba" preceding a name is a polite form).

Dennis Mitchell, a young missionary from Kansas, and a graduate of York Christian College and Abilene Christian University, had been in Northern Rhodesia for three or four years. He had preached in the villages around Kabanga Mission until the new high school opened, then had come to teach in it. He and Anita were married after the school year closed in December, 1969, and left for the States where Anita continued her work as a nurse while Dennis obtained a Master's Degree in Missions and Bible from Abilene Christian University.

In September, 1971, they returned to teach in Namwianga Secondary School, bringing with them baby Brian.

These family ties added great depth and meaning to our lives in the years that followed. Tapes, letters and pictures helped to acquaint us with three other grandsons who had been born since our departure from the States -- Jim Hobby to David and Karen, and Christopher and Jonathan

Hobby to George and Priscilla.

Anita, Dennis and Brian, September, 1971

Wacila Village

Thirty-nine miles from the main road was where Bernard Munsanda,* one of the high school students, was directing us, to a village where his mother lived. We could

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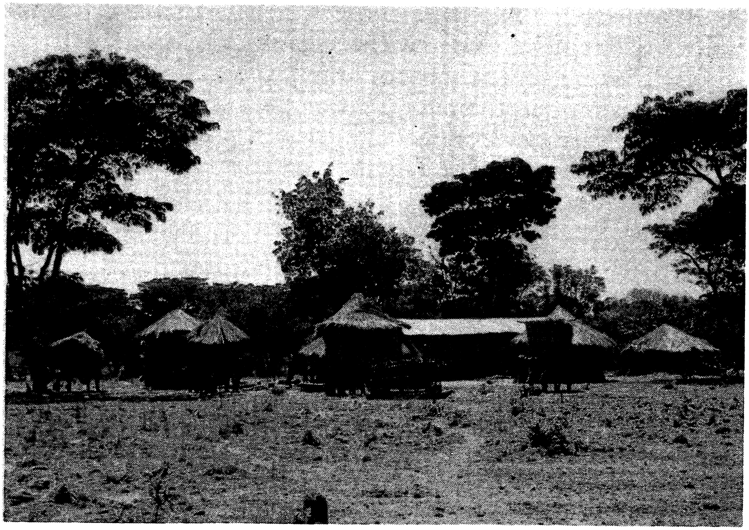
*NOTE: Bernard Munsanda is the author of a book, recently published, *First Day, Seventh Day or Seven Days*? "Some thoughts about Christian Worship and the Sabbath Day."

never have found it without Bernard's direction – through rivers and swamps, fields and forests, but at last we saw on a little rise ahead of us, grass-thatched roofs silhouetted against the evening sky.



Wacila Village, showing the headman's house

Chief Nyawa of this area, who lived in a village nine miles away, had once been one of our students at Namwianga Mission Primary School, and the chief owned a car. But cars driven by white people were different. We brought ours to a stand-still at the edge of the village. Certainly everyone was aware of our presence, but rules of Bantu etiquette dictated that we wait patiently and quietly for the people to come out one by one and greet us by kneeling, clapping, shaking our hands and clapping again. Children, most of whom had never seen a white person, were not stymied by rules of etiquette, so they gazed at us in wide-eyed wonder. Finally, after lengthy exchange of greetings, the headman of the village chose for us a suitable camp site under a tree on the edge of the village. Children were sent to fetch wood and water for our use and were delighted when we rewarded them with a small piece of candy. Wood and water were never a problem, then, on subsequent visits. What and how do white people eat? Curious on-lookers were ever present, but when we were on camping trips in the village, our evening meal was stiff corn meal mush with soup relish, the same as the village people ate.

At the village of Chief Nyawa

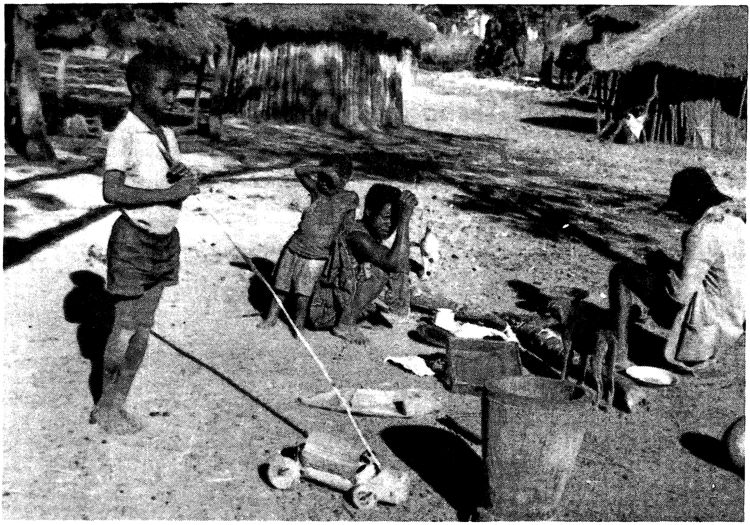
On our first visit to Wacila Village we were asked to treat a young woman who was extremely ill and was running a high fever. Here was our dilemma: we could perhaps help her -- but then, she was very ill. Suppose she died -- would we dare visit this village again? Her illness was probably malaria fever, or some bacterial infection. We treated her for both.

After supper a second camp fire was kindled, and slowly the people began assembling for an evening meeting. Word of our arrival had reached neighboring villages and people came, greeted us and their friends, and seated themselves near the fire, for in the dry winter season (May through October) after the sun was down, the air was very cold and the people were often scantily dressed. This part of Africa is a high plateau, 4,000 feet above sea level, which accounts for the cool temperatures.

The tail-gate of the Land Rover became a table to hold a small 12-volt film strip projector, powered by the Land Rover battery, and the people -- or some of them -- enjoyed an illustrated Bible lesson. In almost every village the young people have organized a chorus, and we were often honored with choral selections long after a deep weariness had settled over our bodies. Alvin had built into our Land Rover a four-inch foam rubber mattress resting on a frame near the roof. At night it was easily lowered to the space between the wheel wells. The low sounds of sleepy animals, the soft voices of the people around their campfires, had a soothing effect and we slept well, due partly to the peace and quiet and partly to exhaustion after a rough drive, doctoring people and having an evening meeting.

Our Land Rover (four-wheel drive)

Before retiring, we made coffee in our thermos, and so we had breakfast inside the Land Rover, knowing that the minute we emerged a busy day would begin, dealing with the people and their many needs. These gentle village people would never harm us, nor would they steal from us, a striking contrast to the large towns where we had to be extremely vigilant at all times.



A toy "Land Rover"

Bernard and some of his friends often made the trip with us to his village and we came to be called by the people "our white people." The woman whose illness we had treated on our first visit had made a quick recovery, and so each time we visited, people were brought for treatment of malaria, sore eyes, diarrhoea and infections of various kinds. There was a clinic at the chief's village nine miles away and if a true emergency arose, the one needing care might be transported there by bicycle. One man brought a child on a bicycle for twenty miles so that we could treat her. We took her on in our Land Rover to a hospital thirty-nine miles away.

One dry season we camped at Wacila Village for five days and conducted a kind of Bible workshop, Alvin teaching the men and I the women. The women enjoyed drawing pictures in note books to illustrate the lesson. One of the women said that the angel she had drawn looked "like an airplane." Another said to her baby: "Jesus was a white baby. Not black like you." When preparing pictures for teaching aids, I always colored the skins of people brown.

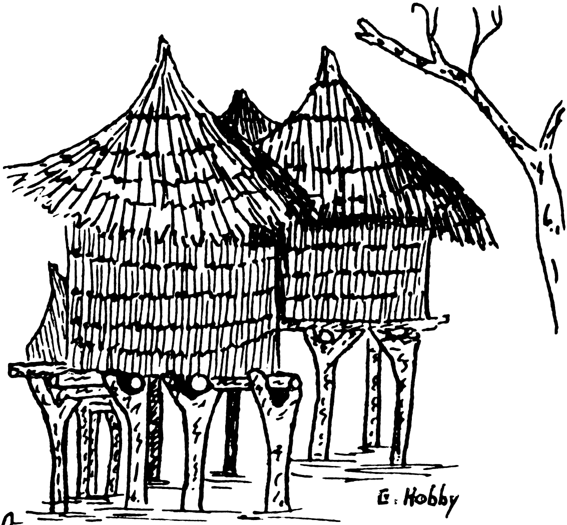
Georgia teaching women, Wacila Village -- 1975

Some of the people requested baptism while we were there, and as was usual during the dry season, the water hole was found two to four miles away over rough, uncharted country.

There were other Christians in nearby villages, and Alvin helped them to choose a central location where they could meet together.

My best friend in the village was an elderly woman who had once been a leper and as a result of this disease had lost her fingers and toes. The disease at the time we knew her had probably been arrested, but I nevertheless took some precautions each time after she greeted us by enthusiastically shaking both of our hands. She did not know her age, but said she was a small child at the time of the Matebele raids into Northern Rhodesia and that her mother had been killed by the Matebele. This meant that she was probably in her late 80's. Friendly and outgoing, she dubbed me "Bachembele ma," meaning "my fellow old woman." This was an honorary title! With each of our visits to the village, soon after our arrival, she kindled a fire and invited us to sit and warm ourselves by it while she and the children shelled peanuts from her meagre store to give to us as a gift. We brought her gifts of food, clothing, salt and sugar, and when her foot became badly infected and she refused to go to the clinic, we treated her with penicillin. We conversed in her language, and my Tonga appeared to be well understood by her, until I tried to tell her about the Savior and the wonders and blessings of a Christian life. At this time her reply was always: "Your Tonga is bad. I don't understand what you say."

Bachembele ma (My fellow old woman)



Grain bins, Wacila Village

CHAPTER 14

SMOKE THAT THUNDERS

There is a little town on the Zambezi River, named for the great explorer of Africa, David Livingstone. It is a tourist town since it is near one of the wonders of the world, Victoria Falls, named "Mosi-O-Tunya" by the Africans – "the smoke that thunders." During all the years that we had been in Africa, this little town had held a special fascination for us, and every trip we made there, perhaps three or four times a year, was exciting, and was planned from one time to the other -- shopping, car repair, dentist, doctor, then a few days on the Zambezi River in a little grass-thatched hut near the roaring Falls. Our children, except the youngest, had been born in this town, and throughout the years, it had been our desire to retire to it when retirement time came.

We had been four and one-half years at the secondary school. It was a full life -- a bit too full for one who was of retirement age. We made no major decisions without seeking the Lord's guidance, and we decided that after a furlough to the States, we would live in another place where demands would not be so great, nor hours so long.

During our eight-month furlough in the States, I gained additional nursing experience with a seven-month stint of working as a staff nurse on a surgical ward in Riverside

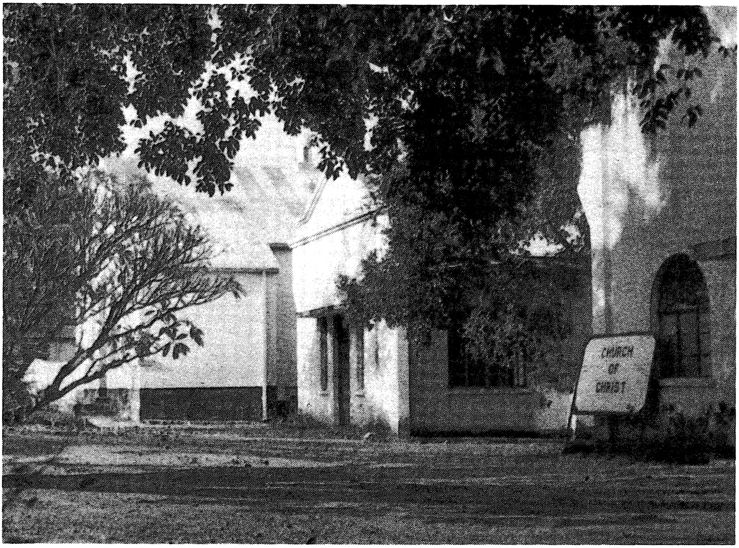
Hospital, Jacksonville, Florida.

After this furlough, and just before we were ready to return to Africa in early January, 1974, we transferred all of our savings to Africa. When American dollars are converted into Zambian currency, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to reverse the process and take the dollars out again. But we wished to buy a home in Zambia. It would be the first we had ever owned.

When we reached Zambia, we began making inquiries regarding a place either for sale or for rent. We were told of lonely farm houses, and we looked at an old hotel in Zimba, half way between Namwianga Mission and Livingstone. Several people informed us of a house for sale next door to Livingstone's Central Church. The Asians who had it for sale would not allow us to occupy the house until it was paid for in full, but our money which had been transferred arrived just in time! The house seemed ideally suited to our needs, and ideally suited to the Lord's work in Livingstone. We always felt that the Lord Himself chose the house for us and placed us in it. No doubt this conviction enhanced our happiness there. We called it our "retirement house" and we planned to live there for the rest of our lives. We remodeled the servants' quarters in the back to serve as a self-catering guest house for the many missionaries within a one-hundred mile radius who frequented Livingstone for the same reasons that we had, in the past.

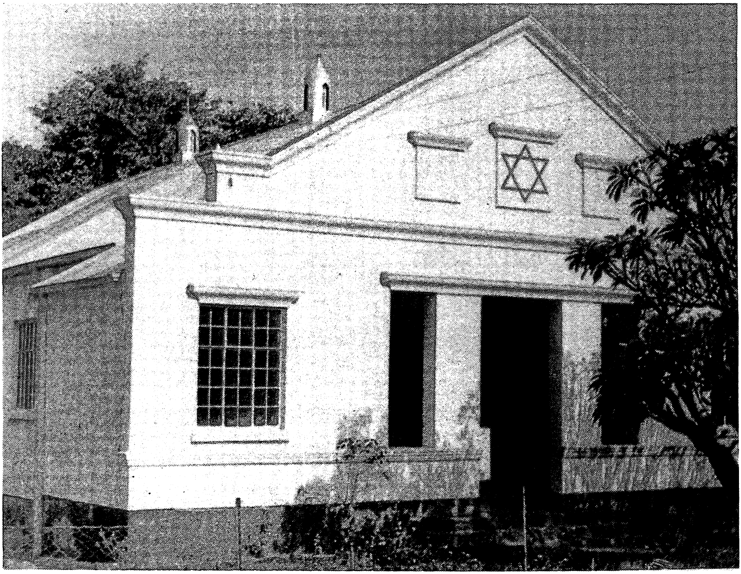
Central Church, next to our house, was the largest church in the Southern Province, with a membership of around two hundred at the time that we came to

Livingstone, and with African leaders and elders. About half of the congregation was children who loved to sing and pray and listen to Bible stories. Available teaching aids and pictures were few, and so we set about collecting Bible-teaching pictures and leaflets, and filling these with lessons that African teachers could use. At David Livingstone Teacher Training College, about seven miles away, I went each Friday evening for about seven years to assist African teachers in preparing their lessons to be presented to the children the following Sunday.



Three buildings belonging to Central Church, Livingstone, Zambia. These were acquired in 1974 from the Jewish community, most of whom had departed Livingstone. The kitchen windows of Hobby's Livingstone house are seen to the far left behind tree branches.

The living room of our new home was large, and each week, one of the classes, in rotation, would see a Bible film strip in this darkened room. The children loved it! I note from my diary that on at least one occasion there were two hundred children packed into our living room. Yes, the enrollment was growing, and that must have been a day when more than one teacher failed to be present!



The largest of the three buildings, where church services were held, was formerly a Jewish synagogue. Before we were allowed to occupy it, the Jews required that the Star of David and the cornerstone be removed, as well as making alterations inside the building.

Alvin did not desire leadership roles in this congregation, since he wished to strengthen and encourage the leaders who were there. For several years he resisted the efforts of the people to make him one of the elders, until the eldership declined in numbers due to transfers of some of the elders by their employers to other areas.

In addition to work with Central Church, our time in our first two years in Livingstone was taken with village trips, Bible translation, many visitors, and visits to the ill and bereaved.

W. N. Short's Short History of Mission Work in Rhodesia

Baby Randy Mitchell was due in our family soon, and so we accompanied the Mitchell family to Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia in November, 1974, where Anita could find adequate care. The W. N. Shorts lived there and when we had lunch with them on November 17th, brother Short, on the 53rd anniversary of their arrival in Bulawayo, intrigued us with a short history of the church in Africa, which follows:

"As far as I know," reminisced brother Short, "the work of the churches of Christ started in Rhodesia in 1897. This was when John Sherriff came from New Zealand. He was a stone mason and left his stone work all over the country in monuments and tombstones, even up to Ndola in Northern Rhodesia. In the meantime he was preaching the gospel to those who would listen to him. By 1906, he had a congregation of about two hundred Christians, and when brother F. L. Hadfield came from New Zealand, he turned the work over to him, and brother Sherriff moved out to Forest Vale Mission and started a school, mainly for colored people. (NOTE: people of mixed race).

"Sometime in those earlier days, an African from Johannesburg, originally from Swaziland, came to brother Sherriff for study. How long he was with brother Sherriff I do not know, but in 1907 he went to the Rand to preach to the workers on the gold mines. He preached here for many years. His name was George Kosa. Among those who heard him preach was an African from Bechuanaland. This man bought himself a Bible, listened and studied. Eventually he was baptized and continued to study. After some years he went back to his home and took the gospel with him. At one time there were 1,500 Christians in Bechuanaland as a result of this man's preaching.

"Brother Sherriff also taught a man from Mozambique who had found his way to Bulawayo. In 1912 this one, Peter Masiya, went to Northern Rhodesia and started preaching among the Tonga people. He first preached at Mukuni Village, then at Mujala Village, where he was preaching when we went to Northern Rhodesia in 1923. (NOTE: His grandson, also Peter Masiya, is one of the faithful Christians and teachers at the preacher training school in Livingstone today – G. H.).

"Another man who was taught by brother Sherriff was Jack Mzila, one of the best preachers and elders of his people that I know of. He was from Mashonaland, and when we were in Mashonaland in the 1930's, Jack's old mother was still alive. She must have been well over one hundred years old, from what she told us of Mzilikazi.

"The Barotse people made a raid on the Tongas and carried away much cattle and slaves. Among these slaves was a mother and her little child, who were taken to the Barotse country. The mother died and when the boy was grown, he ran away. He never stopped running until he reached Bulawayo, where, after some time, he found the stone yard and work. He was taught by brother Sherriff and was later sent to Northern Rhodesia to preach the gospel to his own people. Old Bulawayo Kukana passed away at a good old age, after he had preached to his people a good while.

"It was 1921 that my wife and I sailed from Montreal, Canada, and landed in Cape Town. We arrived by train in Rhodesia on November 17th, our baby, Foy, being ten months old. We stayed with the Sherriffs at Forest Vale Mission for 18 months, then went to Northern Rhodesia in March, 1923. We cleared away the grass and chopped out the bush and started Sinde Mission, brother Sherriff having helped us get the lease for the place. The first two years we lived in a pole and mud hut with dirt floors. A school house and out-buildings were made of sun-dried brick. In the second year we started making brick for a brick house. This was up and we moved into it in 1925.

"In March of 1925, brother Ray Lawyer and family came to help us. This was a great day. Then in May, 1926, brother Dow Merritt and family arrived from the States. We had oxen and a cart when brother Lawyer arrived. When the Merritts arrived we had four mules and a buckboard. In June, 1927, brother G. M. Scott, wife and daughter Helen Pearl, arrived at the mission. Brother Merritt said, 'Brother Scott, you have the gravy. Brother Short walked out to the mission, brother Lawyer went out on the ox cart, I went out on the mule wagon, and now you are in the motor car.' For brother Lawyer had obtained a car a little while before brother Scott arrived.

"Sometime in 1926, brother Lawyer and I had gone out in search of another place for a mission. We had found the place at Kabanga, and brother Lawyer had made application for it. It was decided that brother Lawyer and Merritt should go to Kabanga and begin the work there. They lived in grass shelters until they could get their brick houses built. When brother Lawyer's house was about half way up, his grass house caught fire and burned, with their furniture, clothing, tools, door and window frames for the new house, 150 bags of corn, motor car, etc. This was a great loss, and some of these things not yet paid for.

"In about October, brother Lawyer went out hunting for meat. The dogs started to follow, and brother Lawyer took a spear from the African to drive the dogs back. He ran onto the spear and it went through his abdomen, coming out his back. He pulled the spear out himself, and the African ran to the mission for brother Merritt. Brother Merritt had had some medical training in the Navy, and he tied him up the best he could. They got him to the railway, some 50 miles away. Then a long wait and ride to Livingstone. The doctor operated immediately, but early in the morning the doctor called sister Lawyer. She was able to talk to Ray for a short while, and he passed away. He was buried at Sinde Mission.

"At this time my wife and I were on a trip among the villages north of Broken Hill. We received the message by a runner from the Pumper at Kashitu Siding, about seven o'clock in the evening.

"My wife walked that 30 miles to the railway siding by 11 o'clock the next morning. After some delay on trains we finally got to Sinde Mission, but brother Lawyer had been buried. Sister Lawyer was there, and she did not wish to return to Kabanga Mission, some 150 miles away. Finally, it was decided for brother Scott to stay at Sinde and I would go to Kabanga, finish the house and pay half of the debt which brother Lawyer had left, as well as doing all the preaching I could. After the roof was on the house, I sent for my family. It took two days from Kalomo to reach the mission, traveling by ox wagon.

"During the depression years, our support dropped, sometimes as low as $30.00 per month. For ten years I worked at farming and building ox wagons to support the family, while preaching every Lord's day.

"A few years ago I was out preaching in a village near Bulawayo when an old man came up. After I had spoken to him, he looked at me, and said, 'I heard you speak in Bulawayo in 1922!' I wondered about that, but he told of things that happened there, so I knew he remembered. As I watched the old man slowly turning the pages of his old worn-out Bible, and reading one syllable at a time, I thought of the power of the Gospel, the power which could hold an old ignorant African like that faithful to the Lord."

Brother Short glanced at us across the top of his spectacles. "I think Mother is calling us to dinner," he said.

When Randy was born, December 3, he had two sets of grandparents to welcome him, for Dennis' parents had come to Africa for a visit. I remained with the Mitchells after Randy's birth and Alvin returned to his work in Livingstone. We visited Umtali in Southern Rhodesia where Dennis' brother, Loy Mitchell, was engaged in mission work and I met several of the missionaries of that area.

On our return trip to Zambia, we reached the border about noon, but the officials would not admit us because we had not had cholera shots. We were obliged to drive back onto the barge, cross the Zambezi River and travel nine miles over a rough, muddy road to reach a dingy, dirty-looking little clinic in Botswana. Here we, I suppose, should count ourselves fortunate to have found the necessary innoculations, even though the same needle was used for all of us, and we had no way of knowing how many people preceding us. Anything to be allowed to go home again with three small children!

In January, 1975, Dennis, Anita and their three children, Brian, Joanne and Randy bought a house at the edge of Livingstone and joined us in the work there. Dennis preached and established churches in villages around Livingstone, and both he and Alvin taught in the school newly established by Lloyd Henson for training young Zambian men to preach.

Our chief recreation after the Mitchells came to Livingstone was Saturday noon picnics on the banks of the

Zambezi River, sometimes near a hippo pool where the deep, pig-like grunts of the hippo delighted the children. The effect of the quiet shade, flowing water and darters drying their wings in the sunlight was restful and relaxing. On rare occasions we caught glimpses of elephants near the opposite banks of the river. One day on a drive we were surprised to see two elephants on the river bank near us. Excitedly we tried to call Brian's attention to them, to which he replied, "Aw, I want to see a **train**."

Fire

We would not leave the impression that in our work we have had no temptations, hardships and disappointments. These must accompany every life, but when they are accepted in the correct spirit and with understanding that the Lord can work together for our good, even the adverse happenings, can greatly strengthen us physically and spiritually. In our lives, perhaps one of the best demonstrations of this came in 1976.

Fighting grass fires had been one of Alvin's jobs ever since we came to the mission field. Every year when we lived on the mission, and while the winds were calm and the grass was dry enough to burn, but not very fast, Alvin would burn a "fire guard." With helpers, who carried buckets of water and heavy gunny sacks, he would deliberately set a grass fire and when a strip fifteen feet wide was burned, he and the helpers would extinguish the flames. This burned strip was a protection against wild fires which swept into the mission every year, destroying the grazing lands upon which the lives of the cattle depended; but it was impossible to burn fireguards on all sides. And so wild fires swept in, and when they did, all of the men dropped whatever they were doing and went to fight the fire. If the wind was strong, it might sweep the fire through the tall, dry grass at such a rate and with such intense heat that it was impossible to fight it. Roofs would be burned off thatched buildings and much grazing land would be destroyed.

When we moved to Livingstone in 1974, we were in town and it was no longer necessary to be a fire fighter. But we had a garden plot at the home of Dennis and Anita, seven miles from town. During the rainy season, insects had destroyed much of our garden and when the dry season arrived, Alvin decided to burn the weeds and grass surrounding the garden plot in order to destroy some of the insects. He took with him an African helper and a bucket of water, so that the fire could be extinguished in the usual way.

After completing the job, Alvin was ready to return to the farm house where another missionary family, the Lester Brittells, were living while our children were on furlough in the U. S. A. But somewhere, one blade of grass had not been extinguished and a nylon shoe lace caught fire, then the legs of Alvin's nylon trousers.

Some distance away at the farm house, Mr. Brittell had been tinkering with the engine of his car, when he decided that he would walk down to the garden and see how the grass-burning was proceeding. He arrived at the scene in time to see Alvin rolling on the ground in an effort to extinguish the fire in his clothing, while the African helper, wet sack in hand, stood frozen to the ground nearby. Mr. Brittell grabbed the wet sack, threw it over the flames and extinguished them. Another minute would have been too late.

When I saw Alvin in the emergency room of Livingstone Hospital, the African nurse assured me that the burns were superficial and that he would soon be healed. He was given a private room, and they cared for him the best they could with the equipment available. But when the doctor, who was an Asian, made it clear that skin-grafting would be necessary over a body area of about twenty percent, we had a choice of remaining in Zambia, going south to Zimbabwe or South Africa, or to the U. S. A. After prayer about the matter, we made plans to return to the U. S. A. We had no hospital insurance that we knew of (we had Medicare, a hospital insurance which we were unaware of at this time), and we did not know how the expenses would be paid. After we bought our tickets to the States, our total cash assets amounted to about $600.00. But we knew that if God wished us to go, He would take care of the details, and so we went. Alvin had been twenty days in Livingstone Hospital, and he required sixty days in University Medical Center in Little Rock. This was where Alvin had worked as a Registered Nurse in 1966-67, the floor where he had worked, and the head nurse under whom he had worked, and so of course she took a special interest in his case. So did the other medical personnel. Good nursing care for burn patients recommends a private room, and this he had. They arranged for me to stay in the room with him and help with his care because this would facilitate Alvin's recovery. It was an invaluable experience for both of us, for it was the first time that we had been helpless and in need of the care and concern of others. Love, care and concern sustained us through this difficult period. It showed us the family of God, His church, in action.

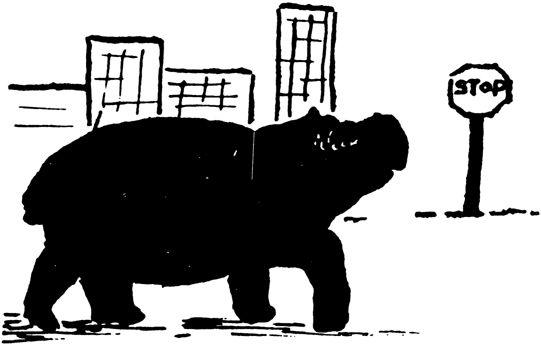
War

Zambia (formerly Northern Rhodesia) had gained independence from Britain in 1964 and Kenneth Kaunda, who had been jailed and persecuted during the country's struggle for independence, became the first president. He was a good man and had good intentions for his country.

When the Africans of Southern Rhodesia began their struggle to gain independence from the "white-ruled regimen of Ian Smith," Kenneth Kaunda felt that he was duty-bound to assist them. There were several Africans who aspired to be the first president of the country, to be known after independence as "Zimbabwe." President Kaunda gave his support and protection to Joshua Nkomo and his guerilla band. They lived in southern Zambia and made raids into Southern Rhodesia from Zambia. Another leader, who later became the first African president of Southern Rhodesia, was Robert Mugabe. He lived with his followers in Southern Rhodesia and Mozambique. These two leaders represented different African tribes who had been enemies before the appearance of the white man, but were now forming a loose coalition in order to gain independence from the hated white rule.

The indiginous people were not a threat to us, but we were not comfortable with having these guerilla strangers living in our area. For one thing, the Rhodesians crossed the border into Zambia and bombed the guerilla camps, near enough to us to cause the curtains of the house to blow outward from the impact.

Early one morning I began hearing single rifle shots at frequent intervals. I counted twenty-five which sounded near, before they faded into the distance. I was curious enough to have a look, but it didn't just seem the wise thing to do. Were the Rhodesians invading Zambia? How did they cross the river? Were they perhaps parachutists? Later in the day we learned that a hippo had left its river home and had come to town. The game warden must have been trying to drive it back to the river, and when he failed, he shot and killed it. The hospitals and prison received the meat.



Alvin went weekly to our daughter's home in the country to teach a Bible class to village people who assembled in the yard. The class was finished, Alvin and Anita were in the cab of the Land Rover for the return trip to town when some guerillas approached. Anita was not so much frightened by the men themselves as by the look of terror and concern which she saw on the faces of the village people. And then the stranger who came alongside the Land Rover to speak to her had blood on the end of his rifle-spear (a rabbit?). Alvin felt that it would be unsafe to try to make a get-away since the men were armed. He was right. The men only asked for a ride to the next farm. Soon afterwards, the Mitchell family moved to town.

Financially, Zambia could not afford the war and the burden of supporting outsiders. Her people suffered in many ways.

In this land-locked country, the single-span bridge across the Zambezi River had been, for all of our years in Africa, an important link with the outside world. Due to the war, the bridge was closed in January, 1973, and Anita scarcely made it back into Zambia from Rhodesia with her new baby, Joanne. Although it wasn't easy, we could make do without the soap, toilet paper, cooking oil and other staples which we had been accustomed to obtaining from shops at the town of Victoria Falls, Southern Rhodesia, across the river.

But medical emergencies such as my broken hip were another matter. The Asian doctor in Livingstone Hospital would not give me clearance to go to the enemy's country (Southern Rhodesia) for treatment. I suspected that he wished to have the experience of doing the job himself. But I knew that orthopedic specialists and up-to-date equipment were available in Bulawayo, and I determined to go.

Since the bridge was closed, Dennis took us by car forty miles alongside the Zambezi River, crossed the river on a barge, and drove another forty miles along the other side of the river to the town of Victoria Falls in Southern Rhodesia. If the bridge had been open, the entire journey from Livingstone to Victoria Falls township would have been seven miles. At Victoria Falls we were allowed to travel to Bulawayo by plane without a clearance from the Livingstone doctor.

When I was able to return home a month later, I flew back to Victoria Falls and an armored car accompanied our bus from the airport to town, where we joined some friends who were returning to Zambia. Just as we were about to leave Victoria Falls town to proceed to the river crossing at Kazungula, forty miles away, we met some people who had just returned from there. They had waited most of the day to cross the river, had finally given up and returned to Victoria Falls. They told us that the barge was broken down. We thought it might be repaired by the time we arrived there, so we went ahead. This road passes through a game reserve, and about half way we saw quite near the road, a herd of about forty elephants -- the most we had ever seen.

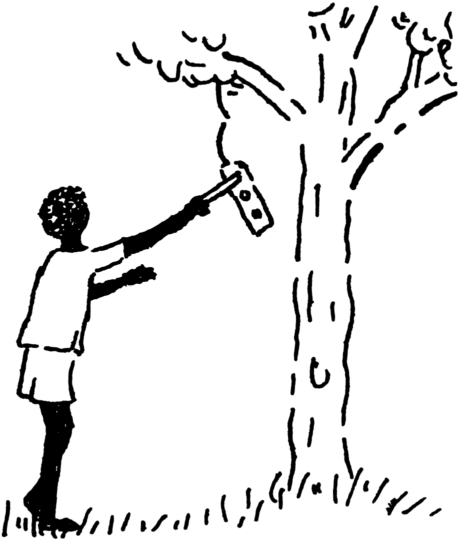
At the river, we spent an anxious hour or more, and had decided to return to Victoria Falls town when a Zambian government official arrived by car, signaled the barge to come for him, and we watched in amazement as the barge pulled away from the opposite shore to ferry all of us across! Zambian customs and immigration formalities made the fourth border post we had passed through since leaving Victoria Falls (one for Rhodesia and two for Botswana). After another forty miles, we were home! Our children, Dennis and Anita Mitchell, knowing the difficulties that we might encounter, had decided that we would not arrive that day.

The Zambians thought that someone had "witched" us because we had had so many hospitalizations within a few months time. This included a trip to Southern Rhodesia for Alvin to have hernia surgery in April. This gave Alvin an opportunity to preach on Romans 8:18-28 and Job, showing that God's power is greater than Satan's. There were twenty-three baptisms that day!

A New Door Opens

The rains were so heavy in 1977-78 that we were unable to reach the villages, but while Alvin taught in the preacher training school, I was offered more Bible classes than I could possibly handle in the regular session of the government schools, which opened their new year in January. Their syllabus allows for three, forty-minute classes of Religious Education per week, and the regular classroom teachers were pleased for me to take this time and give them a break! I chose three primary schools, and decided to teach seventh grade classes in these schools, since they have had more exposure to the English language. There were seven streams of seventh graders in the three schools, making twenty-one classes weekly in all, with a total of about 250 students.

Six or eight different dialects were represented in the classes, and this is the chief reason why English medium was used. In some of the classes, however, English was not well understood, so in those I taught in both English and Tonga, since Tonga is one of the four major dialects and is fairly generally understood. Most of the students were Zambians, including one albino girl, but there were also six British Indian boys.



Ringing a school "bell"

The second year I taught Bible to about 310 sixth and seventh grade children two hours each per week. The experience I had had in the States, teaching sixth-grade children was a blessing. I loved the work some days, but on other days a note in my diary reads: "Classes disappointing. The children remembered so little!" Another day: "First class a flop. I'm still learning" . . . . "6's were a pain-in-the-neck. Tried to get through the day on my own." . . . . "With the Lord's help, I came through this day without difficulty – a lot was accomplished, too."

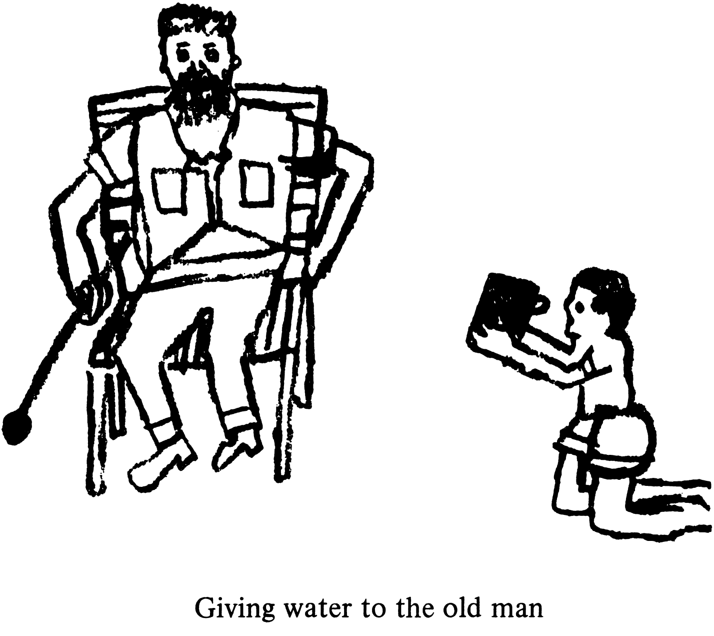
And so I learned that the most important thing was to pray specifically for help with teaching and discipline each day before the day began. I had learned this lesson many years before when I taught the sixth grade, but one tends to forget until the going gets rough. The Lord hears and answers!

Another lesson I learned was not to expect too much of the children. Bilharzia, malaria, amoeba, and hookworm are debilitating diseases, causing anemia and consequent learning disabilities and lethargy. Added to this was an inadequate diet, and oftentimes a home steeped in hostilities, fear, superstition and witchcraft.

The children loved to sing and to learn memory verses. One day I wrote a modern translation of Psalms 95: 1-7 on the blackboard for the sixth grade students to copy, and somewhat as an afterthought said: "If anyone memorizes this, he will receive a prize." I thought perhaps two or three in each class might memorize it, and considered a $1.00 ball-point pen for the prize. Later I reduced it to a 15 cent roll of candy and it is a good thing I did. One hundred ten out of the 150 learned it in English, a foreign language, but the language medium used in all schools.

Of course all lessons were taught with visual aids -- pictures, drama, drawing and writing which the children did in their note books. Excerpts from stories which they wrote on the Prodigal Son: "The son wasted his money on beers and bad women. When his money was finished he went to work for a European." . . . "The father said, 'Bring the best rope and tie it around his wast'."

A child will always kneel like this when offering something to an elder. Drawn by a 6th grade student, May, 1979.



Giving water to the old man

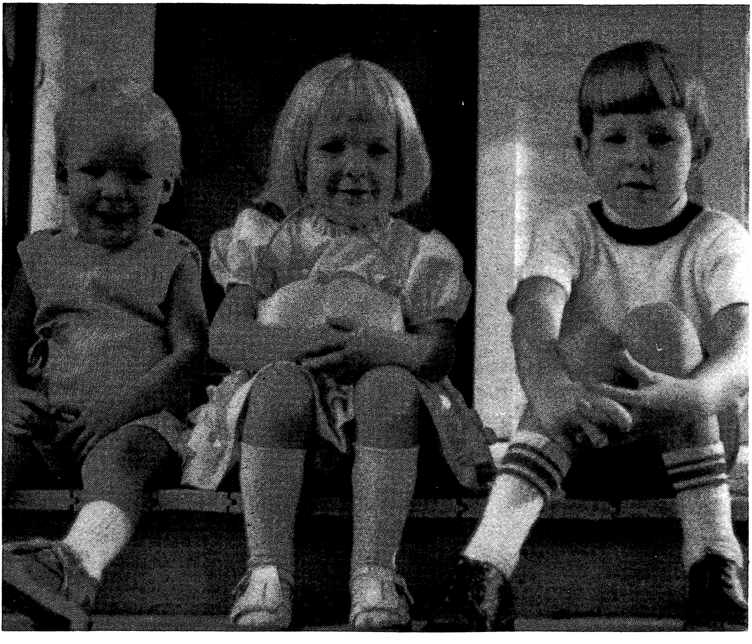
Stick figures in action on blackboard drawings was an effective visual aid because action and props were unlimited, and the students could easily identify with the actors involved. For one thing, they were not white people, as are many flannelgraph characters.

After I had taught for two years in the elementary school, a school inspector decided that the teachers were having life too easy, and ruled that all classes must be taught by the classroom teachers. I was dismayed, but as this door shut, another opened, and I was allowed to teach Bible on a part-time basis in one of the Livingstone high schools, and receive a small salary. About a thousand students attended this school, and Bible teaching was part of the regular curriculum. I made lesson plans following the government syllabus and submitted them each week to the head of the department. We taught the synoptic gospels, and I was free to teach the lessons as I saw fit. But after two years, this work, too, came to a halt with a government ruling that as much as possible, expatriate teachers must be replaced by Zambian teachers.

Our three Mitchell grandchildren, Brian, Joanne and Randy, attended public school in the mornings, but in the afternoon, Alvin, Anita and I had supplementary classes with them at home in order to keep them abreast of American children.

In the public school, usually there were no other white children, but they enjoyed the association with their teachers and classmates and color wasn't a big factor. On Brian's first day at school, he came home telling his mother about a new friend he had made at school. Mother inquired whether the child was black or white, but Brian hadn't noticed and couldn't tell her.

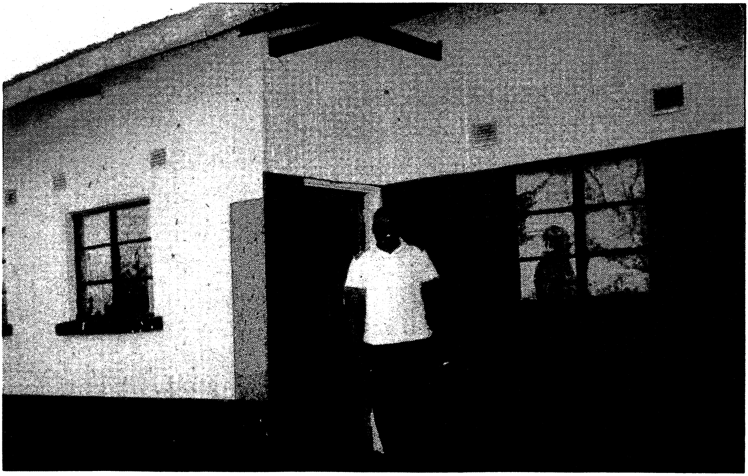
Dennis and Anita were friendly to the children's teachers and cooperated with the school's activities. On one occasion Brian informed his parents that the teacher had asked them to bring "fishes" to school the next day. While the request seemed unusual, they made an effort to cooperate and managed to obtain some small fish for Brian to take to school. But Brian had misunderstood. It was "feces" that the teacher had asked them to bring. A mass testing for hookworm?



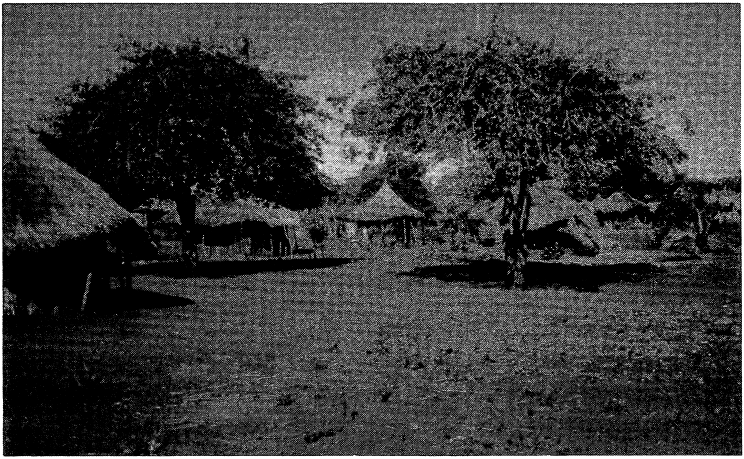
Randy, Joanne and Brian Mitchell – 1976

Mukuni Village

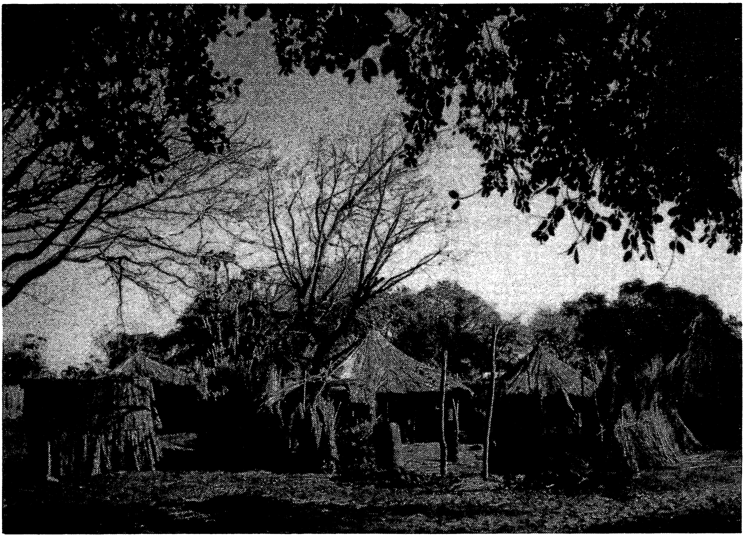
In Mukuni Village, ten miles from Livingstone, was the oldest church in the Southern Province. It was started by Peter Masiya before the white missionaries ever entered the country, and some of the oldest members of Mukuni Church were his converts. Chief Mukuni, though not a church member himself, was related to some of the members and he respected them and the way of life that they followed. At the burial grounds, there was one area for Christian funerals and another for traditional ones. Mukuni was a large village which, besides hundreds of individual huts, contained the Chief's "palace," a store, a beer hall, school and church building. The chief trade of the men of the village was carving wooden curios for sale to the tourists at Victoria Falls, which was only a few miles away.

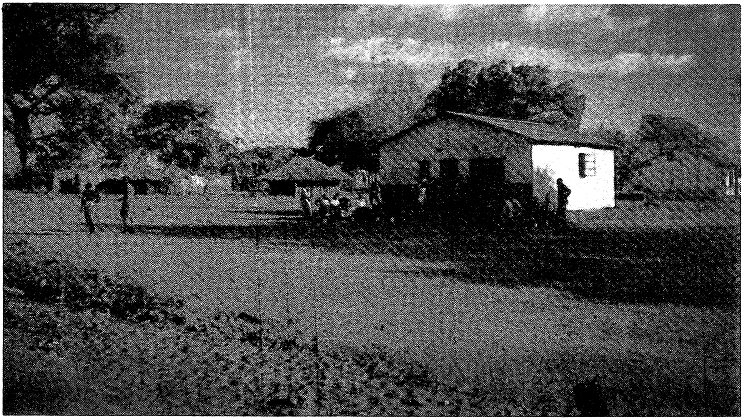


Chief Mukuni at his "palace" – 1982

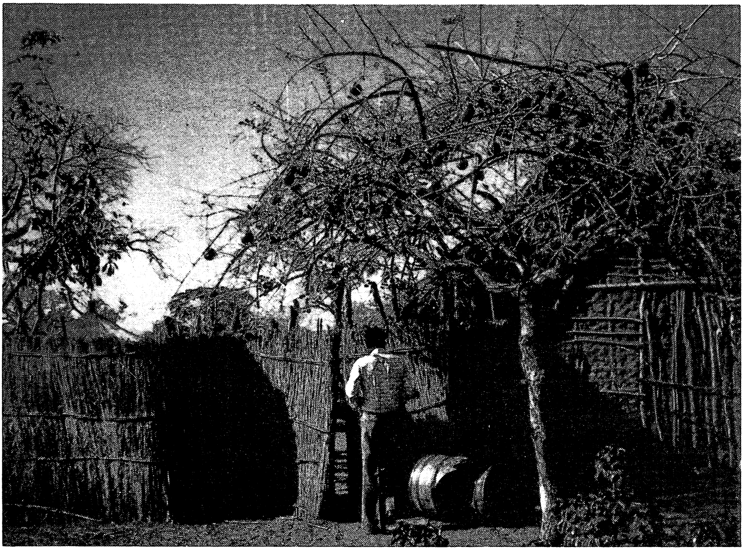


Areas in Mukuni Village – 1982





Mukuni Village Beer Hall - School House in Background to Right



A "Wild Orange" Tree in the Village - Edible fruit does not resemble an orange. Hard outer shell contains seeds and juice -- 1982 pictures.

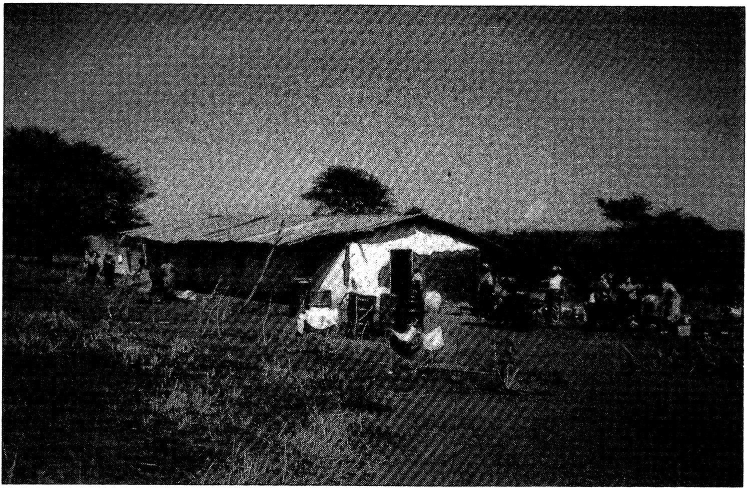
Jordan Simwizi Displays Unfinished Carvings
Mukuni Village, July 7, 1982

For several years I went to Mukuni Village every Thursday afternoon to teach a Bible lesson to the women. The older women had an unusually good grasp of scriptures, and many of them were capable of being teachers themselves. But apparently they loved to have visitors come, and they were so happy and friendly that I enjoyed associating with them. They good-naturedly helped me with my imperfect Tonga, and showed their love for us in many ways. When Alvin received burns in the grass fire, some of them walked the ten miles to Livingstone to bring him a collective gift of money from the people. Estelle, Ena Suzanne, Ena Rutie, were some of the faithful ones, "Ena" meaning "mother of." These women did not have names of their own, but were simply known as "mother of" their oldest child. One little old snaggle-tooth woman with a wide grin always performed for us with the English scripture memory verse which she had been taught many years previously:

"Oh, praise de Lord, all ye people,
For his merciful kindness is great toward us
And de truth of de Lord endureth forever
Oh praise de Lord."

These people had constructed their own meeting house and log benches. With the arrival of the rains and the gardening season each year, the Christian women co-operated to plant a garden of corn and peanuts near the meeting house and the proceeds from the garden were used to help the needy.

Sometimes in the dry season, the women would sponsor a women's camp meeting which was attended by women who lived along the line of rail right across Zambia to the Copperbelt. Women came with their blankets, eating utensils and Bibles, and for several days the Mukuni women were hostesses to the group of one to two hundred women who sang, read, taught, ate and then sang far into the night. A fine time was had by all, but I excused myself for the night sessions, and wondered what kind of "vitamins" these women had been taking which allowed them to have so much stamina which I did not have.



Church Meeting House at Mukuni Village
Spray from Victoria Falls like smoke in the distance
1982

Stirring, in a large pot, insima to feed the women guests
who had come to a women's encampment
Livingstone, 1979

CHAPTER 15

THE TIDE . . . . . . TURNS AGAIN HOME

But where **is** home?

George and his brothers and sister had grown up in Africa and all of them had a yearning to see again their childhood home. For George, this became a reality when he came with his wife and two sons for a visit at Christmas time, 1981. He wished to see the boarding school where they attended in Lusaka, to travel on the "school train," to see his boyhood friends, play areas, the now desolate site where our home once stood, to see the place in Livingstone where he was born and to visit again the southern tip of Africa, Cape Town, where our family spent occasional vacations during his childhood. He had been away about twenty years, and returning to these scenes seemed like a dream.

It was perhaps the happiest Christmas we had ever spent as we shared memories with them and we all, with the Mitchell family, traveled together to visit Wankie Game Reserve and then by train from Bulawayo to Cape Town where George and his family took a plane for his American home.

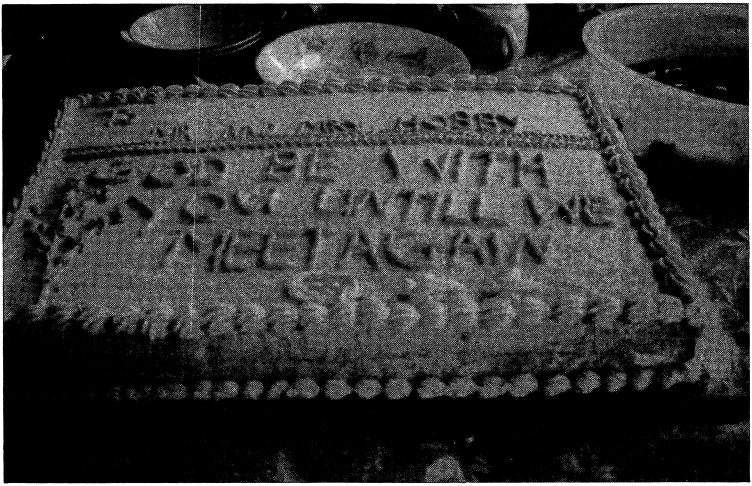
* * * * * * * * * * * *

When we bought our "retirement home" in Livingstone, it was our intention to spend the remainder of our lives working there. "This is my home – my people – I will never leave them," I repeatedly told myself. And this is how Alvin and I felt – until suddenly, almost simultaneously, we had a change of mind and heart. What brought it about? Probably the greatest single factor was the stark realization that this was **not** our country, and that we were "expatriates" (aliens) in it. And this fact was brought home when my Bible classes in the public schools were given to nationals – no "expatriates" allowed if nationals could do the job. I had worked hard and taught well, and I was devastated. Also, Dennis and Anita would soon be leaving because of their children's educational needs. Then inevitably our thoughts turned to our native land and to our children and grandchildren who were there, and whom we scarcely knew. That was it! We would give some time to them while we had a few good years remaining!

When we announced to the members of Central Church our intentions to retire to our family in the U. S. A., they seemed to understand, since they are family-oriented themselves. The Zambian people are sociable by nature and enjoy large parties and gatherings, and so they set about at once planning a farewell party.

After the church service on June 13th, Alvin and I were asked to absent ourselves from the assembly. They wished to do some planning which was not for our ears. The only thing we could find out was that we should not be out of town on June 27th. Again, after our ladies Bible class, the ladies did more planning and asked me to leave. They washed and waxed the floors, and returned the next day to shine them.

Sunday, the 27th, women came early and started cooking in several black, three-legged pots over open fires near the church house. Soon live chickens began to arrive, were dressed on the spot and put into the pot. There was also a quantity of beef to be cooked, forty-five pounds of kale to be cut up fine and cooked, rice, and a huge pot of corn meal mush. The yards and buildings were spick-n-span, and long rows of tables were set up in one of the buildings. They were attractive with dishes, linens, flowers, and trays of small cakes. Atop a large decorated cake were the words conveying the combined wishes of them all: "To Mr. and Mrs. Hobby. GOD BE WITH YOU UNTILL WE MEET AGAIN."



We loved Africa, its people, and our work. If we had another lifetime at our disposal, we would not wish to make any major changes. But it was time for us to go.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

The most delightful, the most comforting and reassuring lesson that has come from our experiences is that God is faithful. He gives us personal care and direction in our daily lives -- a fact that "is darkness to our intellect, but sunshine to our hearts." And so, after we left Africa, He provided us with a little house next door to our youngest son, Ken, now with a Ph. D. in psychology, his wife, Ann, and our youngest grandchildren, Anessa, Jared and Tianna (Gerren came as a "bonus" a year later). Our deepest satisfaction is that all four of our children, their spouses and their children are Christians.

CHAPTER 16

A BACKWARD LOOK -- ZAMBIA TODAY

"A sower went forth to sow." The *Parable of the Sower* has long been a great source of comfort to me. Not all seed fell on good soil, even when the Savior taught. Nor does it ever. Nevertheless, we are only told to sow the seed and to water and look after it. God gives the increase. It is very easy to teach and baptize people in Zambia. Perhaps there is no more fruitful and promising field. But it seems that much of the seed falls among thorns and rocky ground, just as Jesus said it would. It is impossible for us to know just which is good soil until we see the fruits many years later. Some of those Christians whom we thought most promising have fallen away, while others who did not appear to have much ability have gone to remote places, and, while teaching or doing other work to support themselves, have planted churches which are growing and spreading into adjacent areas. We know that this is happening in many places -- making it impossible for us to estimate the number of churches or Christians in Zambia. Only God knows and we don't really need to know. Numbers of baptisms or churches can be very deceptive.

As far as I know, there are no Zambian preachers who are supported by churches in the U. S. A. or other foreign countries. It would be easy to have a large number of preachers hired by U. S. A. churches. But much of their effectiveness would be lost because their own people would not trust their motives. This thought may in part be behind the difficulty of persuading Zambian churches to support their own people to preach to others.

It has been the policy throughout all of our work in Africa to train students and preacher students to be self-supporting, to teach and to preach to others wherever they are, to build their own meeting houses, with the help of other church members, with whatever materials they have at hand – poles, mud and grass. In retrospect, I believe this policy is the correct one. All of us are priests and teachers of the Word.

With regard to meeting houses, those located in cities may be an exception. In the cities there is a building code, and local materials which are usually used in villages, do not meet standards of the town council. Cement, bricks, door and window frames, etc., are needed. Some outside assistance may be needed to construct these houses because the people are poor for the most part, and materials expensive. When there is political unrest, gatherings in private homes may be forbidden, and so no meetings can be held until there is a house for the purpose. We saw this happen in a township of the city of Livingstone, where we helped the people to obtain a building, and church meetings continued uninterrupted.

Methods which have proved effective in Zambia, such as schools, may be counter productive under different circumstances, times and cultures. But for Zambia, we feel that conducting schools was the best method for us at that time. Most of the leaders in the church of Zambia today, as well as the teachers in the Christian schools of today, learned of the Lord and His word in daily Bible classes, either in mission schools or in village schools taught by Christian teachers.

D. S. Mulamfu, one of the most respected of our teachers in Zambia, wrote in 1987: "Mr. Hobby, I wish you could be made young again, so that you could come and teach in the Teacher Training College which is being built at Namwianga. You know among the teachers you taught are found some of the best teachers in the country."

At one time Namwianga Mission operated fourteen schools in the villages, three "mission" schools (Namwianga, Sinde and Kabanga) and two schools in towns (Livingstone and Kalomo) with a total enrollment of about two thousand five hundred students, each with a daily Bible class. By training our own teachers, we were able to give them more Bible instruction before they, in turn, taught Bible to the young ones in the villages.

Although Alvin was the trainer of the teachers, the work done by others of the missionary team was equally important. The missionaries built school houses and homes for the teachers in both the villages and the towns, delivered books and supplies to the schools, assigned teachers to schools and transported them and their belongings to the school site, delivered the teachers' monthly pay checks, and supervised the teachers and the schools. J. D. Merritt, J. C. Shewmaker and Leonard Bailey did much of this work. At first, expenses were shared by the missionaries themselves from their meager personal funds. Then others, such as George S. Benson, came to our aid, and finally the British government paid teacher salaries and helped in part with other expenses of operating the schools.

The government eventually took over some of the schools -- first, teacher-training, then village schools, town schools, and finally, after the country gained independence, Namwianga Mission primary school itself.

About that time, 1967, Namwianga Christian Secondary School was perceived as a prudent step toward the continuation of Christian influence in that area; and at the time we returned to Zambia in 1968, that was our only school, with an enrollment of more than two hundred boys and girls. Many workers have contributed to the development and success of the high school since it came into existence, but only Roy Merritt, son of J. D. Merritt, has dedicated his life to it. He has been the tie that has bound the school together by his devotion to the students and his follow-up work with the Alumni.

In 1982, a secondary school (high school) was opened at Kabanga Mission with the help and encouragement of the Zambian people who contributed funds and labor. Today, the government is encouraging the missionaries to reopen the primary schools at Namwianga, Kabanga and Sinde Missions, as well as to provide high schools at Livingstone and at Sinde Mission. A junior college is be constructed near the high school at Namwianga. Whether or not this rapid expansion is a wise step depends upon the availability and the quality of Christian staff for operating these schools. Since Zambians have been trained, many are able to fill these posts, and I believe the school at Kabanga

Mission is entirely staffed with Zambian teachers and workers.

American missionaries are needed, however, as long as the work is supported with American funds. As I write, at the close of 1987, Dr. Kelly Hamby heads the school work in Zambia, Oklahoma Senator Phil Watson heads the Board of Trustees, replacing George S. Benson, who though retired and nearing ninety years, still works actively for the schools. Those who are considering going and those who are considering sending, might consider the following suggestions:

(1) Don't go if you plan to stay only two years. It takes that long to "learn the ropes" -- that is, customs and thought-patterns of the Zambian people. It is easy for new missionaries to make crucial judgmental mistakes because they don't understand, for example, that an individual will try to gain favor with a new missionary by bringing to him adverse reports of another missionary.

(2) Don't go if you have any kind of problem -- mental, emotional, or marital. The chances of these problems being compounded in Zambia are much greater than the chances that the problems will be resolved.

(3) Churches that contemplate sending missionaries to a foreign field would do well to have them tested by a competent psychologist before agreeing to send them. Church funds have been wasted by sending just anyone who agrees to go without giving consideration to their fitness for the work that needs to be done. In a few cases, it is the failures and misfits who hope that their lives will be turned around by going to a foreign country. These people

are a burden to the missionaries and a detriment to the work in general.

On the other hand:

(4) If you love the Lord, His Word and His people, if you have proved to yourself and to others that you can work happily and constructively with other people, if you would not jeopardize your children's future, then **GO**, for the fields are still white unto harvest and the laborers are few.

We have all heard of famine in parts of Africa, but spiritual hunger in Africa is even more widespread. Probably in no continent of the world does the cry "Give us this Bread" ring more loudly. And Jesus' response, which has echoed throughout this age, is the same: "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry."

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